THIS DARK AGE

A manual for life in the modern world

Volume 1:

Introduction to the Modern World

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I have often played with man, God says. But what a game, it is a game which makes me tremble yet.

I have often played with man but…it was in order to save him, and I have trembled enough because I might not be able to save him…

I often play against man, God says, but it is he who wants to lose, the idiot, and it is I who want him to win.

And I succeed sometimes,

In making him win.

~ Charles Péguy

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE AND USE OF THIS MANUAL.....1

The reason for writing. Organization of the work. Preliminary warning. The use of the aphoristic form. The use of discourse. Avoidance of apologetics. Against political programs. Athanasius contra mundum. What to include.

TRADITION AND ITS BASIC PRINCIPLES 13

What is meant by 'tradition'. The traditional-modern distinction, its use, and its limits. Tradition and convention. Principles and preferences. Principles are causes. Written and oral transmission. Traditional and Western civilization. Tradition as the principle of a rightly-ordered civilization. Vestiges of tradition in the West. The problem with contrasting East and West. The centrifugal force of becoming. The centripetal force of tradition. A vitalizing knowledge. Traditional principles. Transcendence. Truth. Order. Hierarchy. Unity. Truth is not the invention of the formulator. What is necessary in order to understand doctrine. Credo ut intelligam. Practice of the method. Literalists and figurative speech.

AN OVERVIEW OF PRESENT CONDITIONS..... 32

The importance of understanding your environment. The doctrine of Progress. Progress makes knowledge of history unnecessary. The quadripartite division of time. Judeo-Christian tradition. Greek tradition. Hindu tradition. Other traditions. Inseparability of the physical and spiritual. Escapism and religion. The Dark Age. Characteristics of the Kali Yuga. The use of the term "generation" in the Gospels.

Sins of the fathers. A historical difficulty. Barriers separating this age from the previous. Cleansing waters. Genesis of the modern period. The extinction of certain types. The disbandment of the warriors. Chivalric orders of medieval Europe. The samurai of Japan. When and where. The long night. Signs of the Times. Reduction. Quantity. Materialization. Unity and uniformity. Inversion. The supra-individual nature of the thing. Ambient disorder. Avoidance of romanticism. The science of history and the historical sense. The origin of society. The regression of the castes. The spiritual barbarian. The banality of the end. Scientific causality and the life of cultures. Dissolution and inversion.

THE MODERN WORLD

AMERICA..... 75

General remarks. The extremes of reformers. The ideal of happiness. Political messianism. Modernity is a twofold gift. The Declaration of Independence begs the most important questions. Uselessness of abstract constitutions. Idolatry of self in secular states. National security by any means necessary. Abstraction and social institutions. The truth about individual rights. The meaning of the frontier and the absence of diplomacy. A certain kind of anarchy. The genesis of imperialism. Idealism is an expression of senility. Those who initiate modern wars do not fight them. The individual-state opposition. The presence of anti-state ideology. Theory over practice. Various instances of unrealism. The delusion of universality. The ideological paintbrush. Universality and messianism. The origin of the party system and plutocracy. Mixed motives and the Civil War. Technique versus form. Public office or spoils of war? A republic ex nihilo. The limits of intention in a changing world. There are no culture wars. The development of lobbying. Destiny or dumb luck? The Monroe Doctrine. Domestic imperialism. Imperialism as instinct. The Boston Tea Party. The problem of instability. Summary of American empire building. Uniformity and control.

LIBERALISM AND LIBERTY-WORSHIP 123

General remarks. A problem of definition. The discovery of the self. Secularism and the invention of religion. Liberalism and myth. Liberalism and ideology. Lost correlation between right and duty. Undermining the concept of right. Egoism and the loss of political purpose. Theoretical liberty permits actual tyranny. Three forms of Liberalism. Reformation: or religious Liberalism. Enlightenment: or political Liberalism. Capitalism: or economic Liberalism. Capitalism is artificially imposed. Liberalism and cowardice. Reductionism. Univocity fetish and social contract theory. Strife as the basis of civilization. The Liberal and the Traditionalist.

DEMOCRACY 169

General remarks. A historical fallacy. The patricidal offspring of Liberalism. Democracy as the most primitive form of government. Democracy implies the use of force. Democracy as the depersonalization of power. The depersonalization of the statesman himself. The rise of the politician. Honorable men are averse to participation in democracy. The tendency toward materialism. Quantity over quality. Equality, not liberty, is the ruling passion of democracy. Monarchy as a counterpoint for the American mind. Three arguments for monarchy from St. Thomas Aquinas. Security of station and dispassionate judgment. Self-government is a contradiction in terms. Self-government as experienced by the individual. Only the patriarch can identify with the general interest of the people. Patriarchy or the police state. Monarchy is more conducive to subsidiarity than democracy. Power corrupts the corruptible. Power as a necessary condition for humane governance. Democracy necessitates propaganda. The rising costs of democracy. Honor the honorable. It remains for democracy to prove itself in things that truly matter.

KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIETY 209

General remarks. Individualism and egalitarianism produce ignorance. Rationalism as individualism in the intellectual sphere. Unrealism and abstraction. General ideas and ideology. Retroactive effects of ideology. The illusion of common sense. Anti-intellectualism. The tyranny of public opinion. Is man mostly evil or mostly ignorant? Irrationality

and majority rule. Democratization of law. Democratization of truth itself. Authority, ignorance, and the common good. Universal education and the denial of human nature. Against literacy. The myth of universal suffrage. Childhood suffrage? Universal suffrage as the institutionalization individualism. The problem of voter dependency. The twofold ignorance of the voter. Scita and scienda. The cult of incompetence. Popular instincts prefer the inferior candidate. In the absence of knowledge, emotion rules supreme.

CHURCH AND STATE 253

General remarks. Knowledge and action. The caste system. Spiritual authority and temporal power. The separation of church and state. Protestantism and secularism. Religion and economics. Liberalism and the privatization of truth. The weakness of secular government. The true end of human society. Symbols of the relationship. Revolt of the aristocracy. Regression of the castes. Faith and reason placed in opposition. Knowledge vs. belief. The essence of barbarism. Rationalism and the invention of religion. Eternal law. Divine sovereignty. Religion and egalitarianism cannot co-exist. Egalitarianism and caste. Orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Slouching toward mediocrity. Orthodoxy and heresy die together. Tolerance and the heretic. Persecution myth and persecution mania. Law becomes subjective and ambulatory. Legalism and social decay. Marx's opium and American Christianity. Utilitarian religion and zombie Christianity. Toward an organic expression of religious life.

THE PHENOMENON OF PROPAGANDA

ASPECTS OF PROPAGANDA 301

General remarks. A dangerous situation. Democracy and the need for opinions. Propaganda is self-inflicted based on a need. Individual need. State need. Corporate need. Parties as the collusion between State and Individual. Propaganda manufactures products for all. The myth of the general will. The Age of Propaganda. Anonymity. Propaganda as technique. Man as a means. Efficiency. Reduction to simplicity. Keywords. Semantic breakdown. Unconsciousness

of propaganda. No more demagogues. The verbal universe. Propaganda does not require unity. Exploitation of hate. Dependence. The moral paintbrush. Collective transference. Absolutism. Causes and conditions. Individualism. Technological depersonalization. Existential insecurity. Fear and angst. Materialism. Propaganda stops at nothing to give an impression. Atrophy of the critical faculty. Resultant predisposition. The final product. Mass media as an apparatus for propaganda. The dregs of standardized language. Fears about artificial intelligence.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE 331

General remarks. Ad hominem. Ad nauseam. Appeal to fear. Reductio ad Hitlerum. Renaming Vices. False Dichotomy. The lesser of two evils. Common sense. Cult of Personality. Demonizing the Enemy. The Scapegoat. Divide and Conquer. Flag-waving. Managing the news. Slogans, Catchphrases, Clichés. Virtue words. Ideology. Multiplicity of ideologies. Statistics: Fact or Truth?

INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE AND USE OF THIS MANUAL

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The reason for writing.

This collection of notes was produced at the request of my wife and for the sake of posterity. In that sense it was originally written for my family. I offer it here, with some hesitation, on the assumption that someone else might find it edifying even in this poorly edited and barely organized form.

As for the content, it is a work of synthesis integrating the various areas of knowledge necessary for understanding oneself and the reality in which we find ourselves entangled. The end goal of the project—to create a 'manual for life'—has always been unattainable, if not ludicrous. Now, after years of work, I am at peace with the fact that it will never be 'complete' in any real sense. Many of the topics I intended to include have not yet been touched on. I can only guess how preposterously large the project might be before mortality concludes it on my behalf. When it is all said and done, I suspect that it will only amount to a loosely organized collection of notes, a minor contribution to a much larger, more comprehensive work that could only exist as a lofty aspiration.

Beyond the fact that my goal was utterly unreachable from the start, I have the happy distraction of children and the demands of my 'normal job'. These responsibilities force me to be somewhat selective in what I have included thus far. I have also been limited on how much I've been able to refine the content once written. There is a definite unevenness in the flow, and a lack of balance in the subject matter. At one point I will gloss over a complex issue, and elsewhere I will dwell in excess on some trivial matter that seemed essential to me at the time.

All that is to say that the reader should be prepared for a complete lack of discipline especially when it comes to editorial work. My situation being what it is, I have never had the money or the desire to work with an editor. The present edition is much cleaner than the previous ones, but it is likely that you will find errors, unfinished sentences, and odd notes that were obviously scribbled as reminders

for me to put something somewhere but which I never addressed. Some of what I have written I have never read a second time. In that way, this project will have some of the characteristics of a diary, which might be incredibly annoying to some but helpful to others.

Organization of the work.

The organization of the manual is currently as follows:

The first volume (if you happen to be using the print version) contains a few introductory sections on present conditions and the fundamental outlook on the world that we have adopted. The volume is concluded with a kind of appendix on the issue of propaganda, which is indispensable if one wishes to understand the way modern men think and relate to society.

Volume two addresses the problem of evil and the ways in which we are called to confront evil depending on vocation. After proposing a theoretical framework to understand the duty of men and societies to resist evil, there follows a few studies on military history and theory.

Volume three focuses on Christianity. First, there are sections on dogmatic theology which are intended to provide an overview of what the Catholic Church teaches in clear terms. The sections on dogma are far from complete, but in what is presented we have tried to avoid all controversy and speculation and to remain in strict obedience to the common opinions of theologians. In the later sections, which address issues like esoterism and mysticism, we have allowed ourselves a bit more speculative freedom, pursuing what seems most interesting and helpful.

Volume four contains a series of studies on what we have called 'traditional doctrine'. Ultimately it is a work of comparative religion, but hopefully more beneficial on a spiritual level than what is typically published under that heading. There are overviews of several major religions.

Volume five is focused on the doctrine of man. It answers the question: "What does it mean to be human?" Subjects include spiritual temperament, caste, race, sexual differentiation, posthumous states, and the various ways of explaining the body-soul-spirit composition.

Volume six is more personal, addressing the obstacles presented to the seeker in our time. There are observations on how we relate to God, to ourselves, and there is also a section on political participation (or the lack thereof).

Preliminary warning.

Due to its subject matter, this manual is not intended for general audiences. No book on metaphysics and doctrine could possibly be ‘popular’ in terms of readership. The content demands a level of familiarity with history and world religions, as well as a natural aptitude for dealing with abstract concepts. That is why I must insist that the mental discipline and flexibility required to understand what I have to say is not possessed by the average reader. This should not be taken as an insult to anyone, for the same reason that it is no insult to suggest that the average reader probably cannot rebuild a carburetor or transplant a kidney. Every specialized area of knowledge is naturally exclusive to those whose mental attributes coincide with the demands of the specialization. It is easy to see how this is true when it comes to open heart surgery, and this is why we do not often encounter an untrained individual who wants to attempt the procedure. Unfortunately, it is much more difficult to see when we are dealing with abstract ideas and systems. Take, for example, political philosophy, a field that is rife with contradictory concepts and competing ideologies. In such a context it is very difficult to know when you've gone astray or even completely botched the job. Unlike open heart surgery, the incompetent philosopher can quite easily avoid seeing the fact that he has murdered his patient. He can only disfigure his ideas, and ideas cannot sue for malpractice.

All of this is not even to mention the problem of historical and cultural prejudice. Prejudice is, in our view, a natural and healthy sentiment, which should be expected in most people to some degree, as this is what helps to protect a civilization from disintegration. It is necessary to be a 'tribe' and to prefer one's tribe to all others. Nonetheless, these sentiments, although natural, are not permissible for the philosopher. The philosopher must be able to set aside his 'worldly' loyalties in pursuit of the truth, in the same way that a physician must sometimes set aside the natural human distaste for blood if he is to adequately pursue the health of his patient. In order to even begin to discuss traditional doctrine, the student must adopt an attitude of sincerity, which is to say openness to change and to contradiction, and this is first and foremost to

become vulnerable, since it implies that if the truth destroys a belief we hold dear, that we will permit that belief to be destroyed, no matter the pain. That is why sincerity of this kind is so rare and so difficult to maintain. Even when we say we wish to hear the truth, we do not typically lay aside the armor of our prejudices. This vulnerability is the essence of what it means to 'have ears to hear'. Are you willing to risk having your preconceptions deconstructed? Can you stand by and watch your ideological golden calves be melted down and poured into the dirt? Can you set aside a lifelong education that has always assured you that the modern world is the greatest of all possible worlds, that the United States and its 'immortal principles' are the height of human achievement and nobility, that all humanity before us was primitive and ignorant, and all that history really has to teach us is how pitiable they were, and how great we are, and how we ought to pity them for not being like us? If you can't, then we cannot even begin to discuss the nature of medieval Christendom, or the work of St. Thomas Aquinas, since you will have already ensured your own deafness to their value.

These are the challenges presented by the content of this manual, and this is why I am taking time to suggest that what I write is not for everyone. Here I will echo D.H. Lawrence, who said that it was "a mistake of our mistaken democracy that every man who can read print is allowed to believe that he can read all that is printed. I count it a misfortune that serious books are exposed in the public market, like slaves exposed naked for sale. But there we are, since we live in an age of mistaken democracy, we must go through with it." That is what I am doing—I am "going through with it." I feel safe in this, because the primary audience I have in mind is my children, and they will, if they wish, have an adequate preparation. But it may happen that this manual is also read by someone else, and that might not go so well. This is not arrogance, nor 'intellectual pride.' It is experience, and I have accumulated quite a bit of experience, all of it proving to me that even basic logical problems can be insurmountable obstacles for most people, especially when prejudices or preconceived notions are involved. Whether this is because they can't understand or don't want to try because it demands too much vulnerability and takes too much work, I can't be sure, but the result is the same: they do not understand. Of course, I am less distressed than Lawrence. Not burdened by any kind of fame, I don't have to worry about my work being 'exposed naked' before the public. I think it is very unlikely that anyone outside my small circle of acquaintances will ever read this. I am for the most part safe—safe from being listened to but not heard. Still, I wanted

to offer this note to any and all readers here at the outset: this manual will be meaningful only for a very specific type of person. I won't hold any grudges if you decide now that you simply aren't of that type. If you aren't, and you choose to proceed anyway, don't say I didn't warn you.

The use of the aphoristic form.

Flip through a few pages and you will notice that this book isn't written as a continuous and progressive treatment of a particular subject, nor is it neatly divided into chapters that connect and build upon one another. I decided early on that a 'linear' approach would not be possible for this project, mostly because I tend not to think that way, allergic as I am to systems, and also because the subjects I plan to address are much too numerous and varied for a linear approach. It would be a waste of time to try and create an artificial 'flow' between thoughts that are blatantly incongruous. That is why, in order to include as many subjects as possible, I have sought to 'condense' rather than to 'develop'. I have aimed more for 'aphorism' than 'essay'.

The aphoristic form is also practical. Modern life is universally chaotic and hurried. Few of us are able to make time for lengthy works of non-fiction, and when we do find the time, we often lack the endurance it takes to work through long essays and chapters. Aphorism, material that is condensed into bite-size segments, is more effective for people like you and I, since it is neither lengthy nor demanding, and is yet still capable of acting as a support for deep reflection because an idea conveyed in a few sentences is something you can 'take with you' to unpack even after you put the book down. Such brevity makes the thought more digestible while you are working the night shift at a pharmaceutical plant watching vials of medication sprint past you on the conveyor belt. Aphorism is the salvation of the modern thinking man who might wish to develop his mind in the face of a mind-numbing routine.

Add to this the fact that most people who write, write too much, myself included. Given this tendency, the standard approach of selecting a very broad chapter title and then spewing forth thirty pages of text is not very considerate of the reader who knows what they are looking for and simply wants to find it. Historically, it used to be done differently. There was a time when the table of contents told us almost everything we needed to know about a book. Look at some of the classics like Gibbon's "The Rise and Fall of the Roman

Empire", or Tocqueville's "Democracy in America". You will open the cover to find a sophisticated table of contents that makes approaching such lengthy works more manageable. Compare this to a modern scholarly work which might run for five hundred pages and only be divided into a few chapters, with the table of contents providing almost no indication of what the reader is going to find therein. I'm not sure why things moved in this direction, but it seems that Tocqueville understood that a person might not be interested in reading every single thought that he felt inclined to write, and so he divided his ideas into compact sections and this in turn permitted a descriptive and therefore useful table of contents, allowing readers to get within a page or two of the information they need without having to scan through a whole chapter and still come up with nothing but a headache.

In my own experience, an aphoristic approach is best when dealing with the areas of 'wisdom' and spirituality, because these things tend to suffer when subjected to too much analysis, which always ends in systematizing. Think, for example, of the style of presentation adopted by all of the great teachers and prophets, from Christ to Buddha to Muhammad. These teachers did not produce lengthy discourses. They produced proverbs, parables, and *ahadith*. Think also of the *Tao Te Ching*. This is why the Hindus take such pains to condense their doctrines into the most concise form imaginable, such as what you find in the *Brahma Sutras*.

Lastly, I'll just say that this manual is a work of pointillism, in the sense that there is a vision of reality that I wish to convey, but I can only convey it piecemeal, like so many pieces of a puzzle that is not and cannot be completed. Aphorism allows me to provide as many pieces as possible, however small, without demanding that each piece fit directly into the one that comes before or after it. I have only collected as many pieces as I could, and there will be gaps for you to fill as you are able. My sole purpose is to show you a certain constellation of ideas, rather than a full and unbroken picture of the cosmos. Always know that whatever this manual has to offer, it can only amount to a collection of notes for a book that, in the end, cannot exist.

The use of discourse.

It is a modern dogma that 'the free exchange of ideas' leads automatically to truth, hence the emphasis in modern regimes on 'free speech' and our high esteem for 'public discourse'. This belief

is so obviously false that nothing short of a lifelong indoctrination in bad philosophy could get humanity to believe it for as long as they have.

I've never seen any reason at all to believe that on the social level truth prevails over falsehood, or good over evil. The 'good guys', guardians of truth and justice, do not just win automatically by some sort of natural law. That is fiction. The facts, on the contrary, tell us in gruesome detail that things work in the opposite manner, and the lie tends to get the upper hand. We should recall that Christ was crucified and his Apostles martyred. Socrates was sentenced to death by his peers.[1] In other words, the objective pursuit of justice and truth are not instincts embedded in human collectivities, particularly in democracies where passions and tribalism rule supreme.

Remember that it was not Pilate but the crowd who sentenced the Messiah, even to the point of releasing a known criminal just to make sure their scapegoat was executed. It was Pilate who, on the contrary, attempted a bit of 'discourse' with Christ and with the crowd, with absolutely zero positive outcome.

To act according to justice is to act against one's inclinations and even against one's own advantage, and that is why it is so rare on the individual level, and virtually non-existent when it comes to crowds. Yes, according to Christian doctrine, we are told that in the long run justice will have the last word—Christ will return—but that only proves the point, since that moment of justice comes at the end of the world. Justice is not found within the timeline of the worldly narrative—it is the 'afterword'. It is an external power used to restore a world in shambles.

Every election season I am given more proof, as if I needed it, that lies, given the light of day, have the strategic and tactical advantage over truth. The truth can be a hard and unpleasant thing to swallow. It also imposes restraints on those who possess it—and sometimes those restraints are severe. Modern societies worship freedom first and foremost, and nothing places limits on one's freedom like strict fidelity to the truth.

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[1] Although in the case of Socrates, he certainly appeared to be egging everyone on, as if martyrdom was his goal all along and he'd accept nothing less. That does not excuse the crowd, however.

Again, remember Solomon: "With great knowledge comes great suffering." Ignorance is far more comfortable than knowledge, and, likewise, lies are often more pleasant than truth. Especially in hard times, who can blame people for preferring the fiction when the facts are awful?

What is today called 'dialogue' is just an exchange of lies to see which lie will prevail, a competition to see which configuration of errors will get to be in charge of the country for a time. Political debate is just a sentencing of *each man to his own darkness*. 'The free exchange of ideas.' Nonsense. We watch the debates, we cringe at the childishness of it, we turn red in the face with the screaming pundits, but the pursuit of truth really has nothing to do with it. It is just a gladiatorial match. The people watch as the proponents of terrible ideas fight for the right to implement their idiocy as law. We might pick a side, claim that one of them is right and the other wrong—but we really do not care in the end who was right—we care that our man won and that theirs did not. The Romans would pick a man to root for, but it was not about the man, it was about the gore. It is about tribalism. It is about finding a scapegoat for the violent anguish of a frustrated people. The modern world is inherently violent—it displays this on every level. Thus, in the realm of ideas it is the combat that matters, and we'll see truth itself dead in the dust before we'll close the Coliseum.

Avoidance of apologetics.

Another thing we might as well get out of the way concerns what we would call the "persuasive" approach, wherein the writer writes in order to convince the reader that his position is rational, defensible, and valid. In popular Christianity this is called 'apologetics'—which has as its goal the defense of the faith and the 'winning' of converts. It should be obvious already that I am making no effort in this work to be 'scholarly' in what I write here, but I would like to go further, so that it is plainly understood, and say that I'm not even trying to be particularly convincing, especially from the point of view of Christian apologetics. To be truthful, I will admit that 'the defense of the faith' was once a soul-sucking concern of mine—I made serious efforts to demonstrate to others the truth of what I saw—but I have matured (a little) since then, and these days I want no part of it.

I have no wish to convince anyone who does not wish to be convinced. I merely offer this collected data with the understanding

that my readers will take or leave it as is appropriate to each. If anyone becomes persuaded by anything written here, it is not a 'success' chalked up on my side of the scoreboard, and it may be just as likely that the person I persuaded was merely fickle or credulous, in which case little good has been done for either of us. If I digress into argumentation, it should be taken as nothing more than that: a digression.

The "apologetic" attitude automatically impoverishes dialogue, especially the kind of dialogue we are trying to have here. Some things can only be stated with approximate clarity, but never demonstrated with certainty, and in these cases it is always up to the individual to do the inner work required to integrate the data, or else, through discernment, to ignore what I've said as incomprehensible or incorrect. Often, and contrary to the assumptions of egalitarian education, there is no explanation capable of making the idea comprehensible to all—there are only intimations that can lead those capable of traveling. Why this is, and what that means for doctrinal exposition, I will explain later. For now, please know that my position is that when it comes to doctrine, 'apologetics' is an utter waste of time. It profanes the sacred and confuses the student by drastically over-emphasizing the importance of rationalist argumentation.

Against political programs.

Please don't mistake this manual for a set of instructions on how to rebuild the world. The world cannot be saved except by completing its course, which is to say, its descent. Such is the doctrine of the apocalypse and it is a good teaching. Anyone who tells you we are not involved in a process of decomposition, anyone who promises you that thanks to Progress we are actually better off, wiser, and more moral, than any heathen society before us, is selling you the antithesis of what every religion in the world has stated since the beginning of time: the doctrine of the religions is that things get worse, not better, and then it all ends. The only thing we cannot know is when things end, since this could be tomorrow or in a million years.

As sojourners, we are at best fighting nobly for an already lost position, and our civilization, like any other, will have its day and then pass away. Anything else is utopia. Let go of that pleasant dream as soon as you can and waste no more energy and passion on it. The point here is not to depress you, but to drive home the fact

that you cannot 'share the truth' with your society in any comprehensive sense. The writing contained here is for you, not 'mankind' and not 'the world'; it is to help and to guide you as you try to learn about yourself and the created order, which in turn will help you pursue the only thing that really matters—the Truth, the Absolute Truth. Therefore, if I spend hundreds of pages talking about the world, about political ideas, or about the economy, know that this is not to encourage you to become a politician. It is conceivable that you might be called to such a vocation, but it is only barely conceivable, since by and large it is impossible to go near what is today called 'politics' without being poisoned on contact. I might explain the proper constitution of governments, but it is not because I want someone to develop a political program based on what I have written. If I offer suggestions that sound like they could be implemented in your present social context, it is not my intent that you should implement them, and if a person were to form a political party based on what is taught here, I would probably die of disgust, or, if already dead, roll over in my grave.

I want to convey knowledge to you and at the same time prepare you to endure the suffering that comes with that knowledge, and that means that I need to talk about every aspect of worldly life, how it can best be lived, how to understand the things you will encounter, what psychological and spiritual pitfalls to avoid, and how to interpret certain mysteries. It does not mean that I wish for you to change the prevailing order, because in most respects it is what it must be and cannot be 'saved', only contemplated and endured.

Athanasius contra mundum.

One of my difficulties throughout has been to steer away from the tone of an *Athanasius contra mundum*. To question the worth of one's own civilization is a vocation that calls for a certain temperament, and this temperament very easily starts to display a lack of appreciation for beauty and a proper love for man and the created order. What is 'given' is never good enough, and so on, and the virtue of gratitude withers in the face of a world that is far too easy to criticize. Not to mention the fact that any person who has been placed in this world *at this particular time* also has the right to exist in this particular ambience and *to make some kind of peace with it*. Because the hermit or prophet cannot find this peace does not mean that they are permitted to deny it to others, but sadly it is my impulse to do so—to grab everyone I see by the shoulders and ask 'how can you be so satisfied?' This is not healthy, and ought to

be avoided at all costs. I say this now as a personal admission, but also because the reader might share my temperament, and they too ought to watch out for what comes with it. A chronic lack of appreciation for an imperfect humanity, simply on the grounds that it is not perfect, is a habit that, left unchecked, not only destroys empathy and gratitude but also makes needless enemies. For example, in Rene Guenon, to whom I myself owe a great deal, these qualities resulted in a tendency toward condescension and tautology when it came to certain points of doctrine. Some would say he even displayed a form of paranoia, and this is certainly not helpful for students or for opponents. Criticism ought to be carefully counterbalanced with the presentation of a positive doctrine whenever analysis of worldly disorder can be set aside.

What to include.

Before moving on from matters of basic orientation, I will add that one of my struggles here has been the question of what to include and what, for the sake of space, to leave out. Some of this is made easier by the limits of my own knowledge: there are some subjects I had intended to cover but cannot due to incompetence. In other cases, I've simply had to prioritize. For example, it is easy to see that in dealing with the great traditional religions of the world, I have spent far more time on three in particular: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Other traditions, namely those of the Far East, will hopefully receive some attention, but I must treat them far less extensively. The reason for prioritizing things in this way is that Christianity and Islam are closest to us, as men of the modern West. Because they are more familiar, what I wish to say about them will be more readily understood. Also, due to the predominant role these traditions play in today's affairs, it is necessary to comprehend them properly. As for Hinduism, I dwell on it for a number of reasons. First, an 'alien' point of view is sometimes extremely useful when trying to bring new light to an idea that is too familiar to the student. A particular error regarding Christian doctrine might be so embedded in our Western 'mental vocabulary' that it is impossible to exorcise by discussing the idea directly, and in such a case it is very effective to choose instead a corresponding idea from the Hindu tradition, and explain it properly, and then once the new conception has been nurtured in the mind of the student, it is possible to reveal that this is also the proper way of understanding the corresponding idea in Christianity. In addition to this pedagogic concern, which is purely utilitarian, the Hindu tradition deserves priority in itself given that it is the most ancient tradition and, doctrinally speaking,

the most fully developed. The Hindu doctrines will, throughout this study, prove to be an endless resource for arriving at a more complete understanding of many points that are only partially developed in other traditions. Regarding all of this, I will explain more when the time comes to look at doctrine straight on, and not waste any more space here.

At some points I will simply direct the reader to some other work where what I wish to say has been said better by someone else. In fact, in almost every case someone has said what I want to say elsewhere and more clearly. At one point I thought it would be reasonable to simply compile a massive, annotated bibliography and leave it at that. But my desire was that you could formulate a framework for your life without having to thumb through a whole library of material. You can, of course, go that route, but this manual should enable the reader to get by if he has this and nothing else. Suffice it to say that nothing of what you'll read here is ‘original’, and that's a good thing.

I will frequently include direct quotations from other works, but in many cases, for the sake of space, I will point in the direction of source material via footnotes. My general approach has been to condense the Traditional Doctrine as much as possible, and to include only what is needed in order to grasp the nature, location, and extent of that wellspring. If something falls into that category but cannot be conveyed in a page or two, I will refer you elsewhere so that you can find what you need. Another reason for including so many footnotes and citations is a matter of honesty. After all, you need to know who your ‘influences’ are. This does not mean that I am a devout disciple of every person I quote, but it does mean that I take them seriously.

TRADITION AND ITS BASIC PRINCIPLES

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What is meant by 'tradition'.

Catholic readers and, outside the Christian framework, readers who are familiar with the work of René Guenon, Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt, or Ananda Coomaraswamy, will find this entire chapter tedious and can probably skip over it. For anyone else it will serve as a necessary primer on the term 'tradition' as used throughout this manual.

Etymologically, the term 'tradition' means simply 'that which is transmitted'. For us, tradition refers to the content of a revelation in its earthly situation and historical elaboration. From this point of view, tradition is doctrine, but it is also more, since it encompasses the doctrine established at its point of origin as well as its authentic development throughout history. That is to say, when we refer to the Christian Tradition, we have in mind the doctrine bequeathed to the disciples directly by Christ (oral transmission) as well as the Scriptures established later in time (written transmission), as well as the dogmatic formulations proposed by the Magisterium from now until the end of the world (historical unfolding of the doctrine). A tradition is therefore a 'living doctrine' the life of which can be traced from the planting of its seed through its entire development.

From here we might ask if all religions are not traditional. The answer is, for the most part, yes. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism are in fact all traditional religions. Yet the situation is more complex since, in almost all cases, there are revolutions and innovations that occur that may or may not result in the formation of a new 'branch'. This new branch might remain connected to the original vine, thereby remaining 'traditional' and representing a valid expression of the possibilities contained in the original doctrine; or, on the other hand, the new outgrowth might (intentionally or unintentionally) separate itself completely from the established religion, at which point it might retain the name but, having reinvented or re-interpreted the doctrine, or having introduced novelties into it, it can no longer be called 'traditional'.

Examples of both cases are readily available in Christianity. First, the disagreement that resulted in the Great Schism of the 11th century, dividing the Eastern Orthodox from the Roman Catholic, was not deep enough to render either party ‘unorthodox’, and that is why there is an acknowledged communion between the two, despite their division. The Protestant Reformation was a very different case and represents the second possibility. Being the product of a reforming impulse that was in some sense legitimate but ultimately destructive and revolutionary, the Reformation produced a fragmented collection of new churches, each with their own doctrinal innovations, all of them unified by sentiments that were decisively anti-traditional.

This is no exaggeration and, in saying this, we are merely taking the representatives of Protestantism at their word, since Protestant writers, as a general rule, explicitly condemn ‘tradition’, a term which, for them, has a meaning very different from the Catholic usage. 'Scripture alone' is adopted as the single guide to truth and is then used as a foil to discredit any theology that cannot be easily proof-texted. From the traditional point of view, the doctrine of 'sola scriptura' amounts to sawing off the branch that one is sitting on. Without the living components of a traditional framework (such as the teaching authority that is the Magisterium) scripture becomes a mirror reflecting the best and worst of the well-intentioned interpreter’s imagination; the individual then finds himself adrift in a sea of words taken from a language he does not speak and from a time he does not know that speak to him of ideas he is almost certainly not equipped to untangle.

We will address the issue of oral and written transmission shortly, but here we'll simply say that for a traditionalist, scripture is tradition, or one of its 'modes' of transmission, as valid as all others, but never absolutized. In Catholicism the error of 'Bibolatry' is naturally excluded.

To return to the main point, when we reference tradition, we are not dealing with profane theories, human inventions, personal preferences, or cultural idiosyncrasies, but with transcendent knowledge. When we refer to a ‘traditional civilization’, we mean any civilization that is animated by a revealed doctrine so thoroughly that the institutions, arts, economy, and daily life of that civilization revolve around that same transcendent center, and this center acts as the principle that guides and informs every peripheral activity, however worldly, like the hub of a great wheel, so that social life is

'baptized' such that every task becomes kind of ritual or prayer of religious participation.

Now it should be obvious why, in what we will call traditional civilizations, the established religion seems to sit at the top of the social hierarchy. This is logical and in fact necessary, since it is the role of the religious authority to maintain, develop, and facilitate the transmission of grace throughout the body of believers.

The traditional-modern distinction, its use, and its limits.

We spend a great deal of time discussing the opposition between what we will call the 'Traditional World' and the 'Modern World.'

Because of this emphasis, it needs to be said here at the beginning that this is primarily a didactic and rhetorical device, adopted because helpful to illustrate certain points. We do not wish to define ourselves by this opposition, nor is it even necessary in order to say what we have to say. Nonetheless, because our readers are 'modern' it will be helpful to describe that 'world' and to circumscribe its limits, meeting them where they are, and then lead them in the direction we wish to go by setting up an alternative. This requires the establishment of an opposition for the simple reason that they must first be shown that there is somewhere else that they can go, since as things stand, most modern people operate on the assumption that their way of thinking is the only possible way, and that all else is irrationality or barbarism.

We make the modern world our 'opponent' but must not allow this opponent to become our center of gravity, with the result being that we would have nothing to offer but criticism. To proceed in such a way is self-defeating since it means that we depend on the opposition in order to say anything. In other words, we have nothing positive to say, and no center of gravity within ourselves.

This is the problem one sees with Protestantism in general, and which is implied in the term 'Protestant' itself. Without Catholicism to set itself against, Protestantism would have no sermons to preach and no doctrines to teach, since things like 'sola scriptura' (scripture alone) and 'sola fide' (faith alone) only make sense if you are staring at the Catholic Church and trying to distinguish yourself from the pre-existing doctrines of that tradition. Anytime you allow this to happen, you become dry-docked, attached to your opposition and

defined by it, and in that sense you are, ironically, dependent for your identity on that which you reject.

So again, we do not really wish to define ourselves as anti-modern, which would make us nothing more than a simple 'reactionary'—a term we embrace somewhat, provided it is understood as a secondary label and in a certain relationship, but not as a basis for everything else. On the contrary, we stand for certain positive principles that existed before the advent of the modern world, principles that without doubt equip us to build a view of the world and an approach to life that can stand on its own two feet. But since we are situated in the modern world and live among people who think according to the modern vocabulary, it is necessary to frame the discussion as an opposition between the modern world and something else. This 'something else' is what we call the traditional world, or, when speaking of doctrine specifically, we call Tradition. This positive ground is our true foundation and our center of gravity. It is the same foundation preferred and taken for granted by all preceding civilizations aside from the modern West, and that is why we refer to them as 'traditional civilizations,' speaking also of 'traditional religions' and 'traditional peoples.' In each case, we have in mind a type that is very different from its modern version.

The term 'Tradition' is, of course, a weak choice: to modern ears it is ambiguous or, if it has definite meaning, it is not at all the meaning we intend for it to have. Nonetheless, it was necessary to choose such a term, and since others who share our mission have made successful use of it in other writings, it makes sense for us to cooperate by adopting the same terminology, even if it requires a bit of work at the outset to clarify what we mean.

We could have just as easily said 'Truth' or 'Wisdom,' but these terms also have ambiguous meanings, and for reasons that will hopefully become clear, the word 'Tradition' is more appropriate from an etymological standpoint once its meaning is recovered and distinctions made.

Because we will refer to the modern-traditional opposition so frequently throughout this manual, it makes sense to deal with it directly here toward the beginning, providing in the sections that follow a loose definition so that everything else will make sense and we will not come off as unnecessarily 'reactionary' and will, on the contrary, be understood as a representative of a long-standing and in fact timeless body of knowledge.

Tradition and convention.

We have defined tradition, but some additional distinctions will be helpful.

In contemporary parlance, the term *tradition* has become a pejorative term. It usually refers to any procedure or method or activity that was put in place because it 'worked,' or because it made sense to someone at some time and has continued for no other reason than that 'we've always done it this way'. In other words, *tradition* means for modern people the mindless repetition of something that probably doesn't have any reason for existing aside from habit or practicality. This usage confuses *tradition* with something of a different order, which is more appropriately called *convention*.

Conventions are arbitrary in design and utilitarian in nature. They serve some decided end and are only acknowledged as legitimate only insofar as they continue to serve that end. A modern programming language, for example, follows a set of *conventions*, and these conventions are only valid within that context and can very quickly become superseded by new conventions that are better at achieving the ends the programmers set for themselves.

Likewise, certain behaviors or social practices can be considered conventions because they also were 'invented' either by accident or with purposeful consideration only in order to achieve a particular goal within a particular context and are subject to change if the context changes or if a more effective convention is discovered. What we call 'manners' are a particular type of convention and, as we all know, are binding only to a certain degree, and can even become silly and harmful if over-emphasized.

A convention, then, is a thing that is arbitrary (anyone can invent one), expendable (can be discarded at a moments notice), and relative (might make sense here and now but may not make sense tomorrow or for someone else).

Given the fact that tradition is often used as a synonym for convention, we can understand the outright disdain shown by many people toward so-called 'religious traditions' because these, it is assumed, are simply man-made procedures that ought to have died out long ago. In other words, to the modern mind, traditions are conventions that stubbornly refuse to go away, and, moreover, a society or religion or cultural group that labels itself as 'traditional'

is essentially labeling itself as one characterized by backwardness and a tendency to resist growth and development, clinging to obsolete habits, doing nothing more than 'hold people back' or poisoning the progress of religious life or of civilization with discredited habits or ideas.

Having described the meaning of *convention*, we can simply say that this is not what we mean when we speak of *tradition*, and we hope that when the reader hears a contemporary refer negatively to 'tradition', it will be understood that what they ought to have said was *convention*.

Principles and preferences.

Tradition is an aggregate of principles, and if we were to summarize the problem of the modern world in a single sentence, we could say that *the modern world has no principles and, in the absence of principles, has established itself on the basis of preferences.*

Everything else follows naturally from this, and one of the primary purposes of this manual is to acquaint the reader with actual principles, and not merely principles of the social order, but primarily of the metaphysical order. Metaphysical principles alone are supreme, and if properly grasped they are capable of giving order to everything else, and are in fact the only thing that can do this.

That is to say, he who comprehends the metaphysical will be capable of comprehending the political and of passing judgement on its applications, since the higher comprehends the lower.

If this all sounds strange, it can only be because the prevailing modern view maintains a confused idea of what principles are. Principles are the result of a knowledge of reality. They are given, not invented or chosen.

Preferences, on the other hand, will always be somewhat arbitrary and may or may not have anything to do with reality or objective truth.

In the modern world we think that 'freedom' and 'equality' and 'human rights' are principles, but obviously these are merely preferences of a certain order, or rather they are pseudo-principles based on a predisposition.

Principles in the true sense are more like 'facts' about the nature of reality—the total reality, metaphysical as well as physical, and with regard to man this includes his bodily, psychic, and spiritual dimensions: body, mind, and spirit.

To illustrate the point with a simple example, we can say that hierarchy is a principle, while equality is a preference that not only ignores the principle but outright denies it. Hierarchy is an aspect of reality that is fundamental to the structure of everything we know, regardless of which order we are discussing—physical, psychic, spiritual; terrestrial or celestial—whether the Kingdom of God or the world of man, hierarchy is the rule. Equality exists only in the mind and in the Declaration of Independence.

Principles are causes.

Viewed from another aspect, we can say that principles are the causes of things. The principles of the created order, for example, are what predetermine its structure. That is why we say that creation is a reflection of the mind of God: God is the principle of his creations and so the nature of creation is determined by the nature of God. Thus, on the human level, knowledge of principles permits us to act in accordance with the laws of reality and guides all of our plans and programs. Without principles to guide us, our efforts will inevitably fly in the face of the truth. Knowledge of principles provides a superstructure within which we are permitted to construct, and without which all of our projects are doomed from the start. When a civilization rejects or forgets true principles, it is a law of history that destruction, perversion, or disorder must follow. We should note here that this does not necessarily mean poverty and suffering on the social order. Depending on where the 'absence of principle' is most pronounced, the disease will express itself differently. For example, on the individual level, a man without principles might actually prosper and become very wealthy, while on the inside he is barely human. On the collective level, a civilization can sacrifice its own soul while prospering materially. And it is precisely this situation that we are dealing with in the modern world. Principles, then, are at the heart of our discussion here, which implies the study of doctrine, since doctrine is nothing other than the knowledge of principles, knowledge of *the Principle*; and the study of doctrine must begin with a proper understanding of what we will call 'tradition.' Tradition, properly understood, is to doctrine what doctrine is to principles, representing the total unity of doctrine and its means of transmission, collectively developed and

collectively preserved, for these reasons 'supra-individual,' and containing in synthetic form the total knowledge of principles bequeathed to man since 'the beginning.' That is why, as will become abundantly clear, any civilization that is not established on the basis of tradition will 'lack principle,' and therefore direction, and therefore order, and will do violence to itself and to others that fall under its influence, floundering as it must in its own ignorance.

Written and oral transmission.

In the West, tradition is sometimes used in a limited way to refer specifically to orally transmitted doctrine, as opposed to the scriptures or other written forms of transmission. As we mentioned already, to differentiate themselves from Catholics, Protestant groups will say that they accept 'scripture but not tradition,' meaning that they reject whatever doctrine they cannot find explicitly stated in the Bible. Ignoring all the obvious difficulties and contradictions inherent in such a position, we only wish to say for now that this notion of tradition is not valid. We already noted that, etymologically, tradition simply means 'that which is transmitted,' and for us, as for the Catholic Church and indeed all Eastern civilizations, the idea of tradition embraces both written and oral forms of transmission. The attempts of Protestants to prefer one form over the other would not be taken seriously by any traditional organization, because the distinction in question is artificial. Moreover, because most doctrines are orally transmitted first and placed in written form later, Scripture is in a sense the 'product' or 'crystallization' of a pre-existing oral tradition without which it could not have come into being. In other words, oral transmission typically precedes written transmission. For this reason, if we were to place them in a hierarchy, we would have to say that oral transmission has a kind of primacy, and was the only mode utilized by the founder of Christianity Himself, although again we should not insist on this point as if we wished to present one as more legitimate than the other, which inevitably pits them against each other, something we have no intention of doing. It is only the observation of the historical and logical order of things.

The attempts of Protestants to deny the legitimacy of oral transmission should be taken as an expression of the underlying egalitarian individualism of the Reformation, which, like the modern world in general, insists on reducing everything to its simplest form, rejecting all that is subtle, all that requires submission to an authority, all that is of a 'supra-individual'

character, and only accepting what can be seen, touched, and easily grasped by the general population. This inability to appreciate the supra-individual nature of the Christian Church is also apparent in the demand that each book of the Bible be attached to a single author, even when it is clear that the scripture in question was not 'authored' by anyone in particular.

Traditional and Western civilization.

We hesitate to separate tradition from the concept of civilization, because in the case of traditional civilizations, the two terms are synonymous. What we mean is simply that for a civilization like that of the Hindus, all aspects of social life, from the structure of the family, to the sciences, to the laws themselves, are simply adaptations of transcendent knowledge contained in the tradition. Civilization is in every way an 'expression' or a development of the tradition, and all is attached to that point as the spokes of a wheel are attached to a hub. Everything has its 'principle' in the doctrine and is but a secondary application of it. However, this is only the case with traditional civilizations.

When we move to the West, particularly after the period of the Middle Ages, we see a stark contrast. In the United States, for example, there is no authoritative doctrinal center to act as the organizing principle of American civilization lending order, form, and unity to all its various parts. On the contrary, Western civilization in general has, willfully and without reservation, divorced itself from 'the oppression of tradition' by means of very meticulous anti-traditional processes.

The revolutionary period could be described as a far-reaching act of 'shrugging off' the last vestiges of tradition in Europe; and with the Declaration of Independence in America, we saw the first 'nation' built entirely upon anti-traditional principles. For post-revolutionary Europe and America, social institutions are, by design, unable to be influenced by any superior, unifying principle and instead are seen as 'autonomous.'

Law itself comes to be seen merely as an expression of the 'will of the people'; work life ceases to be a 'vocation' with religious undertones, and instead becomes merely a way of 'making a living', in other words pure toil. The sciences have likewise staked out their own independent spheres where they develop themselves chaotically without reference to any traditional metaphysic, denying

their dependence on anything but their own theories, which they draw from their observations of matter, which is to say, from below, rather than from above.

Nothing in the West is required to justify itself with reference to a superior principle. Rather, everything is left to the manipulations of the scientists and the 'freedom of individuals.' Social development is determined by either materialism or anarchy. That is why it should be remarked that only in the West can we speak of 'civilization' as something separate from 'tradition,' since only here do they present themselves as almost entirely distinct.

It is, perhaps, no accident that it was Western civilization that brought the term *civilization* into being, which it would then use as a kind of 'patent' granted by itself to itself as a way of setting itself over any culture that does not mirror its values. For our purposes, however, and due to the familiarity of the term, we will refer to both Eastern and Western groups as 'civilizations,' acknowledging that in the East, tradition is what characterizes a people, while in the West it is the absence of it.

Tradition as the principle of a rightly-ordered civilization.

Summarizing what has been said, then, we can identify tradition as a body of transcendent knowledge that acts as the principle of a given civilization, gives it direction, and preserves its order. All sciences, trades, and institutions are then merely secondary applications of the knowledge contained in the tradition, which is of a transcendent nature and therefore capable of lending itself to so many diverse adaptations.

Vestiges of tradition in the West.

The West, although nominally disowning its traditional ties, has retained residues of the Christian civilization that gave birth to it and to which it was loyal throughout the Middle Ages. Some of these institutional 'residues' are not strictly religious, being natural to some extent, but it was the framework of Christianity that supported them and granted them legitimacy, and in the aftermath of the Enlightenment they have either deteriorated or remained only as anachronisms that no longer had any 'vitalizing' principle to maintain and develop them.

The institution of the family is one such example, and is now, in the West, nothing but a kind of ‘superstition,’ and one that is slowly dissolving in the acid philosophy of individualistic Liberalism. This is becoming clearer to Westerners at the present time as the structure of the family, including the basic definition of marriage, is intentionally dismantled or neutralized. Laws built up over millennia in support of the ‘natural family’ are called into question, construed as prejudiced, overly 'exclusive', or even sexist in the face of modern ideals. Even those who want to save the family cannot protect it because in most cases (and unbeknownst to themselves) they too adhere to the tenets of modernism and so they destroy with one hand what they cling to with the other. The only context in which the family made sense, which is that of a hierarchical, traditional, religious framework, has been rooted out.

We do feel the need to append a note here to acknowledge that there is such a thing as civil marriage and this is legitimate, in the eyes of Catholicism, since marriage is, as we have said, a natural institution, being as it is an aspect of the family. We do not wish to say that only marriage according to religious discipline is a true marriage. We only wish to highlight the fact that the nobleness of the family is only apprehended by an authentic anthropology, such as that which is offered by traditional religion. So while marriage and the family do not depend on religion for their validity, an authentic religion plays for society the role of 'expert in humanity' and is the only authority capable of safeguarding the more subtle truths about man.

The problem with contrasting East and West.

It may seem unfair or arbitrary to characterize the West as a monstrous aberration while suggesting that Eastern civilizations are more ‘normal’, constituted as they still are around an authentic tradition. The truth is that the West was not always what it is now, and for centuries it was loyal to Christianity, and the traditional principles we might see in Eastern civilizations were by and large identical (in principle, if not in application) to those that animated medieval Europe. The West was not born a perversion but became one through very distinct processes that we will discuss in detail elsewhere. We do not criticize the West for what it is in itself, but for what it has become, for its betrayal of certain truths without which man cannot become a fully developed spiritual being.

We should also admit openly that caution is necessary when it comes to idealizing the East. Indeed, it would be silly to put Eastern

civilizations on a pedestal as if we wished to imitate them as they stand. The East seems to be following the trail blazed by Europe in the last few centuries. It did display some initial resistance to the disease and in some cases put up an impressive fight, but ultimately the delay seems to have only made the transition uglier once it finally succumbed. We must grant that the East, like the West, is capable of betraying its truth. Therefore, we use the East as a positive example strictly from the point of view of whatever remnants of the traditional framework are still operative, and only insofar as it has not given itself over completely to modernism.

A time may come very soon when we will have no positive point of comparison at all, and we will perhaps be forced to speak not of 'East vs. West' but of the world as it stands vs. a properly constituted civilization of which no example remains to be found.

The centrifugal force of becoming.

Anything established within the material order is immediately subject to decay and dispersion, which are the governing conditions of *becoming*. The order of becoming exerts a force that can be called centrifugal, and this operates on every level, whether psychological or physical. This is why societies detached from a transcendent, unifying center tend to become focused on the material order, pursuing ends that are 'practical' (such as the creation of wealth, or extension of political power) instead of moral or religious. As they give themselves over to this unconscious materialism they become more subject to its laws. As a result, they become expansive or 'imperialistic' and begin to grope and stretch their 'influence' across the globe, as if the way to peace were to break away and flee from themselves. They become slaves to an urge they cannot even identify, forced to invent ridiculous justifications for this violent impulse. Most forms of colonialism are a manifestation of it. They then boast of great 'discoveries' that resulted from their materialism, and they claim responsibility for improving the human condition all over the globe through their courageous feats of 'exploration', but they gain nothing thereby, not in the realm of pure knowledge and certainly not in terms of scratching the itch that drives them into this frenzy. They only become more disturbed and more restless. Unable to imagine any alternative way of coping, they constantly redouble their efforts. Without something to counterbalance this urge toward horizontal (worldly) dispersion, which is truly a 'will to death,' the civilization in question grows like a cancer until it exhausts its own

vitality and resources, at which point civilization withers and prepares itself to be consumed by an external power.

The centripetal force of tradition.

Civilizations established on a traditional basis are subject to the conditions of becoming, as all are, but by virtue of the spiritual center around which they revolve, they are imbued with a unifying and 'regenerating' force. This is why they seem to cling to their way of life so obstinately. They sense the peril that comes with innovation and only proceed with great caution. In this way they establish a degree of equilibrium between two tendencies. First, there is the inevitable tendency toward dispersion, which leads them to live and procreate, to perfect themselves through earthly and productive vocations, to produce art, and to grow patiently in practical knowledge. But over and above this force is the 'magnetic' force of tradition which, in addition to revitalizing the culture and instilling order in the face of the encroaching chaos, can render the tendency toward dispersion healthy, or if not healthy, at least relatively benign. At any rate, the forces of *becoming* are kept in check 'from above', and never allowed to predominate. This is why Eastern civilization was, until recently, characterized by a degree of cultural stability, and by a persistent order of life. It is why 'nations' do not appear, since nations are a sign of fractured unity and alienation. The transcendent principles of the tradition penetrate all of life and hover above it, and this creates a focus 'upward and inward' rather than 'downward and outward.' This is the only explanation for the apparent 'immortality' of civilizations like India and China. It is why they appear so old that we cannot even determine their age, as compared to the West which, even now, still in its 'youth', seems on the verge of destroying itself in some nuclear, environmental, or cultural catastrophe.

A vitalizing knowledge.

Here we would like to comment further on a point already mentioned, involving the misuse of the term *tradition*.

We must be careful when considering the body of knowledge that goes to make up the tradition as something the reason for which no one any longer understands. This is particularly important for Western readers who tend to look at ancient wisdom as something poured out long ago and, although it was perhaps understood when first written, is now simply an incomprehensible collection of odd

statements that must be accepted ‘on faith’, rather than being truly comprehended by anyone.

The principles at the source of a true tradition are not dead, nor are they ‘lost’ to the civilization. On the contrary, a traditional civilization will be in constant contact with these principles, and the doctrines they maintain, and their scriptures as well, should be seen as the product of the constant contact with the original wellspring.

This is, unfortunately, the reverse of how it is sometimes imagined in contemporary Christianity, where the scriptures, once ‘inspired’, were written down and were thenceforth articles of ‘belief’. This view must be discarded, and although we hate to use weak comparisons, we could say that for a living tradition it is as if the link with transcendence that originally inspired the writing of the scriptures never subsided and is maintained perpetually through constant contact with the ‘living doctrine’ thanks to the religious authority whose role is to preserve this knowledge.

In the Western world, it is perhaps only the Catholics who can grasp this, since they have retained the notion of a living, supra-individual, perpetually unfolding doctrine, preserved by a priestly class for the benefit of all. Moreover, the horror displayed by Protestants at the idea of ‘developments’ in doctrine is evidence of their incomprehension of a tradition that is alive but invisible, preferring instead their English-language scriptures, which are visible but long since deceased. In a way, we could also say that for Protestants, the Bible itself is a ‘superstition,’ since without the living tradition to authorize it and preserve its meaning, it becomes merely words on paper, a grimoire for the untrained to interpret and invoke at random.

That said, we can end by saying that tradition represents knowledge of the highest order, in communion with the transcendent, which alone can unify and give a proper order to civilization. Tradition is the invisible point, and from this point all healthy activity proceeds as a radius from the center of a circle. All cultural products of traditional civilizations are prolongations of the spiritual core, and no matter how far these extensions reach, they maintain their contact with the source, and in this way everything is kept in its proper place, and nothing is lost, and all is as one. In the absence of tradition, the opposite occurs.

Traditional principles.

All traditional civilizations are united by their fidelity to certain principles, even if they might apply them differently. They are each so many variations on the same theme. In fact, we should not be surprised at diversity because the possible social applications contained in these principles are virtually endless, which does not mean that all are valid, but only that we should be careful to distinguish between cultural expression, which varies widely because it is a product of the human type that produces it, and the underlying principles that guide this expression. The principles are everywhere the same, and they provide the context and limits in which human expression can flourish. Thus, we never condemn this or that cultural idiosyncrasy: we condemn only the wanton betrayal of a transcendent principle. And what are these principles? The list could be formulated in a number of ways, but to name a few, we could say: transcendence, truth, order, hierarchy, and unity. We will comment on each of these and hopefully it will become clear why traditional civilizations displayed a fidelity to each, even in the face of human variation, while the modern world has taken great pains to abandon them. We will also add that, in spite of all the contemporary rhetoric about equality, personality, and human dignity, it is the modern world that seems unable to accept the stark differences in human types, and attempts to force all the world into one mold.

Transcendence.

Civilizations of a truly traditional character are ordered to the realm of transcendence. Every institution within them has a higher justification for existing or else it is not allowed to exist. This is because man's desired end is seen as existing above or beyond the purely physical plane. Usually this element can be seen most easily through the presence of colorful and complex mythology. However, the incorporation of the transcendent principle does not necessarily imply a "religious" institution within the society. For example, ancient China (Taoism) and India (Hinduism) are both excellent examples of traditional civilizations, but their structure was not "religious" in the sense that we usually understand the word. There was no "church" or "theology," only a body of doctrine taken as spiritual knowledge, and this knowledge was superior to all else. *This* is the sort of "knowledge" we refer to when we use the word Tradition. Anything that subverted, ignored, or impeded man's

pursuit of the transcendent principle was considered harmful and was eliminated from society as much as possible.

Truth.

A traditional civilization does not question the existence of an objective truth. Nonetheless, the traditional conception of truth warrants further explanation, because it cannot be stressed enough that the "truths" of Tradition are supra-rational and supra-individual. They are not something comprehended by the mind or formulated by a man. They are very much unlike the rational "truths" preached throughout modern philosophy, and they have almost nothing in common with the "positive" truths of science. Traditional truth is a matter of direct intellection, which can be imagined as something akin to "intuition," even though that term itself falls somewhat short.

Order.

"In the beginning…" So says the book of Genesis. And indeed, always in Traditional myth the world begins when a supreme being brings order out of chaos. Paradise was the moment of supreme ordering against the reign of disorder, and thus order and perfection are closely linked. Order is therefore sought out by the traditional civilization against all forms of anarchy.

Hierarchy.

Transcendence demands a vertical ordering. Therefore, transcendence demands hierarchy, because hierarchy is nothing more than order aimed at the heavens. A society ordered strictly to the earthly or "horizontal" dimension has no need for hierarchy, because it isn't going anywhere but "outward" and has no conception of "higher" or "lower." This is why every traditional civilization has built for itself some form of the caste system.

Unity.

If God is the single source of all things, then the higher one rises toward God the more unified and harmonized all things will come to be. That which was fractured will be made whole, so to speak, not in the sense that everything must collapse into God and cease to exist, but that any separation, disharmony, and alienation will cease to exist, and everything will fall into its rightful place. This is why the traditional understanding of knowledge was symbolized by the

"Great Wheel" with God at the center. The center point of any wheel has nothing within it, and is therefore an excellent representation of the invisible transcendent principle at the center of all knowledge. The spokes stretching outward toward the circumference then pass through various exteriorized layers of knowledge, extending away from their source and seeming to grow further and further apart as they touch the outermost rim of the wheel. The modern sciences sit on this very edge, and it makes sense that they seem to be completely separate kinds of knowledge having little or nothing to do with one another. Yet again, as one moves toward the center of the wheel, all knowledge is drawn closer together and the person would eventually become aware that even those subjects which seemed so unrelated were in fact separate pieces of a great unity. Thus, the Traditional view of knowledge holds the subtle spiritual truths as central and higher than all else, and knowledge that is inferior and purely rational has its place further from the center.

Truth is not the invention of the formulator.

Reality has an existence that is independent of anyone who exists within it or as a part of it, and truths are simply aspects of reality. When philosophers espouse through their systems ideas that are actually true, they are not inventing anything, but merely giving unique expression to what has always been the case, and which was probably already known, even if it had been forgotten or was otherwise formulated in previous instances. That is to say, it is only *error* that is the property of individuals, and when some idea appears to be entirely novel it is almost certain that he who expresses it is largely, if not entirely, mistaken. As the old saying goes, heresy survives by the truth it retains, and often a small fragment of truth is capable of giving astoundingly long life to the most egregious of philosophical mistakes.

What is necessary in order to understand doctrine.

The first thing to be said about the study of any traditional doctrine is that, in order to understand it, it is necessary to undergo a kind of mental reformation in order to adapt oneself to the traditional context in which that doctrine is found. This is what Guenon understood with regard to the Hindu doctrines, and it is the whole purpose of his *Introduction* to that tradition, which many have observed is not so much about the Hindu doctrines as it is about the conceptual rearrangement necessary to begin to make sense of them. What is unfortunate is that Guenon did not see the necessity

for the same kind of mental demolition and reconstruction in order to approach each and every religion so that it might speak to us on its own terms and in its own language. Had he seen this he might not have been led to dismiss Christianity out of hand.

Credo ut intelligam.

The second requirement is belief in the message. This is epitomized by Augustine when he says, 'I believe so that I may understand.' This maxim is of great consequence for the study of any Revelation, be it the Gospel of Christ or the Koran: faith unlocks the mysteries and one cannot proceed beyond a certain point without faith. The obvious implication here is that if one does not believe one will never understand. If one does not approach Hinduism or any other faith on the assumption that what it says about itself is true, then one will fail to comprehend what it says. In our own experience we have found this to be true, and that it is impossible to derive useful information from a writer who does not believe in the religion about which he writes. The best spokesman for a religion is that religion itself, and it is a hard truth that the reason for this is that it can only be comprehended from the inside, which is to say, by becoming in some sense a believer.

We can add here that to believe in the truth of a spiritual teaching, one need not actually practice it, although this is necessary to advance upon its path. What we mean, rather, is that one can accept the truth that is present in an alien tradition and only by doing this can one understand it properly, and to insist instead that it has no value and that all who belong to it are ignorant or evil, is to resign oneself to ignorance.

Practice of the method.

The third requirement is that one actually make use of the path provided by the Revelation. Spiritual realization outside the context of a traditional form is chimerical.

Literalists and figurative speech.

Unbeknownst to most of us, we tend to interpret figuratively statements in Scripture, the meaning of which can only be fully grasped if it is taken literally. According to Catholic hermeneutics, there are a multiplicities of levels of meaning in Scripture, but all of them are derived from the literal.

What is ironic is that the same people who insist on a literal reading of Scripture are those who insist on a figurative meaning when the literal one seems a bit extreme, alien to their understanding, mysterious, or even distasteful. Thus, literalists refuse to understand Christ's claim at the last supper regarding his body and blood in any sense other than figurative (they might say, 'symbolic', but this is an improper use of that term, since a true symbol has an identity with the truth it represents).

However, it is not only strict literalists who do this, but it seems to be natural to our understanding in that we tend toward the easy and the comfortable—for it is much easier to take figuratively St. Paul's teachings about all believers forming one body than it is to try and plumb the depths of this teaching as if it pertained to a *real unity*.

This is perhaps one of the unique aspects of the Christian revelation, referred to already: that it lays bare the esoteric even at the most obvious level, so that in order to maintain an exoteric perspective (the preference of the literalists), even the literalist approach must be abandoned and replaced by the figurative. This will be explored in more detail when we discuss Christianity specifically.

AN OVERVIEW OF PRESENT CONDITIONS

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The importance of understanding your environment.

It is a matter of prudence that you understand the unique characteristics of your time and place. If a person intends to travel into a hostile wilderness, he is a fool if he does not, at the outset, make efforts to understand the conditions and environmental forces with which he will have to cope. Is he in the desert or in the arctic? What is the season? Is it day or night? Are there indigenous people with peculiar customs? Are they Christians, communists, or cannibals? Your acquaintance with these things will decide whether you reach food, water, and shelter, or on the other hand, confusion, hunger, and death. Since I can only assume that you do not wish to behave like a fool, your first task must be to identify the ambient conditions of the modern world, and this will enable you to seek out what is healthy and beneficial, and what is toxic. And make no mistake, the environment is exceedingly dangerous.

The doctrine of Progress.

First and foremost, you are not where you think you are. You think you are on the peak of history, looking down from these glorious heights with pity at your ancestors who are below you; who stare up at you with their dirty, diseased, ignorant, ape-like faces; who would deeply envy your existence, except that they are not even intelligent enough to comprehend its greatness, and so cannot even come close enough to you, intellectually speaking, to envy you. Is this not what you have been taught for as long as you can remember?—even if you don't believe in Evolution, you almost certainly accept the same type of thinking applied as a general worldview: that all things have been building up to the great masterpiece of evolutionary genius which is *you*, the modern, free, educated, civilized man; *you* the great envy of history, the pinnacle of the human form. And if you are an American, well, you have the privilege of extending this *a priori* self-satisfaction to your country as well. The greatest nation in the world, right? And not just the world today, but, in the history of the world. What an exquisitely convenient doctrine!—It is the doctrine of Progress, with a capital 'P'. According to Progress, which serves as the universal religion of the modern world, historical development

moves from worst to best, corruption to perfection, disorder to order. Not only is this held to apply biologically, via evolution, but even mentally and spiritually. Not only do primates become persons, but primitive ignorant persons become modern, intelligent, freedom-loving Americans. In short, Progress upholds a view of creation that places Hell at the beginning of time and the Garden of Eden at the end. Paradise ceases to be a reminder of human frailty—a reminder of a lost perfection leading to present brokenness—and becomes instead a future destination—an inevitable future destination—toward which humanity is moving; the New Jerusalem will be the result of a natural law rather than a supernatural intervention on the part of God Himself in order to save a decaying cosmos from annihilation.

Progress makes knowledge of history unnecessary.

In addition to being flattering, this doctrine has the benefit of rendering unnecessary any real knowledge of history. Since we already know we are superior to our ancestors and are only going to become more superior as time goes on, why would we try to understand them, much less learn from them?

This is the precise opposite of what all religions have taught since the beginning of time. They present history as a process of *involution*, according to the law of increasing entropy—and this is the very antithesis of *evolutionism*. Evolutionism is the result of a biological process adopted as general philosophy, and it is typically bad philosophy.

We must insist (and we will elaborate on this point in our section on anthropology) that an objective look at reality supports the religions. History properly understood moves downward rather than upward, and it is rarely flattering. The true story of 'progress' is a tale of progressive decadence. The scientists themselves would see this quite clearly if only they would examine their own 'laws,' namely the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which is really just a restatement of the metaphysical law of *involution* we have already mentioned, but applied to physical systems.

The quadripartite division of time.

In accordance with this law of involution, the traditional world developed for us an indispensable paradigm or 'key', vital to understanding the direction of history and man's place within it.

This cosmological key, which unlocks and brings into focus the past, present, and future, is the traditional doctrine of the *Four Ages*.

In accordance with the gradual process of dissolution, it is said that the world passes through four distinct Ages (also called eras, "generations") each characteristically different from the one preceding it, and always accompanied by spiritual atrophy and distinct alterations in physical conditions governing earthly life. This four-fold division was often symbolized by metals of decreasing purity and resilience, usually listed as gold, silver, bronze, and iron. These are referred to as the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. We should point out also that these are not to be confused with the terminology used in modern anthropology and archaeology, where descriptive names for historical periods are chosen based on tools or materials believed to have been discovered at certain moments, a purely secular convention that has nothing to do with metaphysics or the nature of historical progression.

Judeo-Christian tradition.

This doctrine presents itself in the Hebrew and Christian tradition through their respective scriptures, specifically the book of Daniel where it finds two separate and distinct expressions. First it is elaborated through Nebuchadnezzar's dream, in which a statue appears with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of clay mingled with iron. Within this passage, the image is explained to King Nebuchadnezzar as a sequence of "kingdoms." Exegetes have, of course, gone to great lengths in their attempts to pin down precisely which historical kingdoms are in question, but this is not our concern at the moment. Traditional representations were understood to contain multiple levels of meaning, and thus traditional interpretation took this into account. So, while the attempt to link the "kingdoms" to specific historical peoples may be a valid pursuit, it is ultimately an inferior one, limited as it is to the *historical* layer of meaning, which is the lowest category of traditional interpretation. We are concerned here rather with the deepest and most profound category, which was called *anagogical*. In an *anagogical* context, therefore, the four metals do not correspond to four historical and geographically positioned peoples, but rather to the four Ages: Gold, Silver, Bronze, and Iron. The last substance (clay mingled with iron) represents the period of indistinction and chaos which we know as the Apocalypse.

The fact that modern exegetes do not mention this interpretation is a great demonstration of why 'private interpretation' of scripture always horrified the Church: it shows how much what we already think we know determines what we will get in our 'Bible studies.' Christians who do not attach themselves to a traditional framework are doomed to be limited by their methodology, not to mention their mentality, to discovering only the most literal and superficial meanings in their Scriptures.

There is some irony here: today's Bible apologists lament about how methodologically narrow their atheistic, scientific, and materialist opponents have become, using this to explain their blasphemous conclusions. In all this they are correct, except that they have adopted the same narrowness in their own field, and it has had the same blasphemous results. A long history of exegetical technique was discarded, resulting in all interpretive possibilities being reduced to only the literal, only the most perspicuous. Luckily this was not always the case, and therefore we find in St. Jerome's writings the doctrine of the Ages clearly stated as well as man's current position on the timeline properly identified. Another early Christian exegete of the Four Ages, Hippolytus, even went so far as to identify the "clay mingled with iron" with *democracies*!

Further, we are affirmed in our interpretation by Daniel's second statement of the doctrine. The prophet receives a vision of four great beasts, each distinct from one another, each appearing more terrible than the one previous. The final beast is nothing if not an example of formlessness, multiplicity, and chaos, armed specifically with "iron teeth." As the angel proceeds to explain, these beasts represent four periods of increasing disorder, the fourth of which will "devour the earth." This should also be connected with the great "conglomerate beast" which appears in the book of Revelation.

Greek tradition.

We should not be surprised, due to the relative proximity of the Greek and Hebrew civilizations, to find their language identical in this matter. As enunciated by the poets Hesiod and Ovid, the quadripartite division appears again as the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. The Greek tradition also goes into greater detail as to the conditions of earlier ages, something Christian writers were less concerned about. The Golden Age, it is said, was characterized by justice, harmony, and peace. Here men did not have to labor, for the earth provided its fruit willingly.

Throughout the Silver and Bronze Ages, man becomes progressively more malicious and given to worldly concerns. According to the law of entropy, man's contact with the spiritual becomes obscured as his reality is overcome by 'solidification'. The result is that he gives up on transcendence as it seems to withdraw from his experience of life. The gods eventually take notice. Zeus, disgusted when he is offered a child-sacrifice, decides to destroy the earth and bring an end to the Bronze Age. A deluge comes, and the earth is wiped clean, all except for Deucalion (son of Prometheus) and his wife, Pyrrha, who survive the flood by constructing a "chest" or "ark". The couple repopulates the earth, with their most notable child being named Hellen, who would become the matriarch of the Hellenic race. This moment (the destruction of humanity via a great flood) marks the end of the Silver Age and ushers in a new era of tribulation, the Iron Age. This Age is the furthest from the Gods, where men are not only malicious, but also impious, having very little awareness of the Divine. Disorder reigns, men live without honor, and the human race will degenerate to such a degree that, according to Hesiod, babies will be born with grey hair on their heads.[2]

Hindu tradition.

Hindu tradition contains perhaps the most developed form of this doctrine. Here the ages are termed *yugas*, and are themselves placed in the larger context of a cosmic "cycle" known as a *manvantara*. The ages are, respectively, the Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, and the Kali Yuga. Symbolically, each of these four represents one of the four legs of the great bull of *dharma,* which is the traditional law. At the end of each age, one of the four "hoofs" of *dharma* ceases to function, symbolizing the loss of traditional truth and the obscuring of man's primordial spirituality.

Other traditions.

This same doctrine appears again in Persian and Chaldean forms and can be seen across the Atlantic in the Mesoamerican doctrine of the Five Suns. Each tradition has its nuances, but the principle and basic structure are universally acknowledged. Always the progression is in the same direction, which is completely opposite to the supposed 'progress' in which our contemporaries delight.

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[2] *Works and Days*, 174.

Inseparability of the physical and spiritual.

We typically envision reality as being constituted by two orders: spiritual and physical. This is not quite adequate, as we will see in our discussions of cosmology and spiritual anthropology, but since it is the normal way of seeing things in our time, we can begin here and insist that, even within this simplistic paradigm, we must understand the spiritual and the physical as intermingling. The physical cannot invade or assert itself against the spiritual, because it is of an inferior order, but the spiritual and invisible can and do intermingle with everything we consider 'physical'. Nothing is 'purely physical' and there is, from the point of view of metaphysics, no such thing as 'matter' as we normally imagine it. In other words, all beings are in some sense like man, who is at the same time spiritual and material, yet always directed primarily by his invisible principle. Else, he would cease to exist immediately, in the same way that even the body of a dead man ceases to be a body, strictly speaking, as soon as life is no longer present, and enters 'decomposition' at that very moment.

In the beginning, man was ordered to perfection by the superior spiritual principle, and the spiritual will always have the final say, just as all material effects can be traced, ultimately, to an immaterial cause. For primordial man, the spiritual predominated almost completely over the physical—and this is why men communed so easily with the gods in the beginning, almost to the point of walking and speaking with them as if they were literally in their midst. However, as the laws of dissolution proceed (after the 'Fall') he becomes progressively disordered, both visibly and invisibly. Chaos begins to assert itself. In fact, we could envision the history of the world as a process of cosmic collapse, so gradual as to be imperceptible. As the cosmological hierarchy collapses, the physical begins to predominate over the spiritual, the visible over the invisible. This is what we mean when we speak of the 'solidification of the world'.

Entropy increases constantly on every level. For this reason, the increasingly chaotic nature of each age presupposes changing conditions not only in the world but within man himself. Man is always man, but due to progressive degeneration it is possible to distinguish between men of different ages based on the stage of degeneration in which they find themselves.

Again we can refer to the modern scientific law of entropy, simply expanding that law to man's spirituality in addition to the physical orders of the cosmos. Remember that it was not until later Ages that man was forced to toil for his daily bread. This is a natural consequence of dissolution in the physical order, which causes the earth to stop *willingly* yielding its fruit, and instead of Edenic coexistence, the Earth and all life on it becomes somewhat antagonistic to man: plant life ceases to present itself as a plentiful garden and instead becomes instead a field to be tilled and nurtured against drought; wildlife becomes elusive, withdrawn, predatory; even the biological system that is the body is assailed by disease and imperfection. Thus, man develops agriculture to coerce the hostile ground into providing him his daily bread. He must hunt and butcher to acquire meat. He will even learn to amputate his own limbs and remove his own organs when they fail him and turn against him.

This is not a denial but an affirmation of the doctrine of the Fall. Man's spiritual disorder must have been introduced before any disordering in the earth itself. In whatever manner we envision it—literal or symbolic—we must insist that, by the very order of things, the spiritual offense preceded the material consequences.

Escapism and religion.

It is sometimes said that religions were invented so that early men could "escape" into the heavens, presumably out of fear and ignorance. But is this accusation in the end a projection? Is it not the modern man who escapes to the heavens—in the most literal sense—in his spaceships?

This is, of course, what we should expect from the progression of the Ages: As man's spirituality becomes more and more obscured, he can no longer speak with his god directly; he becomes blind. As the physical order of reality asserts itself over the spiritual, both within man and without, he begins to feel alien and discontent on the earth; this agitation leads him to develop navigation and travel through physical space. He says to himself that he is "conquering the earth" as an act of courage, not knowing that he is driven in this fashion only because the material order is conquering him. He can feel the walls closing in, and even the whole world feels much too small. The materialist is naturally claustrophobic, and this is because he populates a world that is a fraction of a fraction of the reality he was originally given to explore. The spiritual frontiers, which far exceed

anything that can be reached beyond the moon, are closed to him. The colonization of space, by which man goes to insane lengths just to float outside his own atmosphere, is the final proof of our alienation, choosing the void over our own home—and on this we congratulate ourselves! We launch ourselves in fragile capsules into the cold emptiness, and we call ancient man the escapist.

The Dark Age.

We have briefly outlined the doctrine of the Four Ages. We can now turn to the question of where precisely we stand on this cosmic timeline. Here tradition is unanimous in its response: We live in the final period—the Iron Age. Norse myth calls it Ragnarok (literally "Twilight of the Gods"), or the "Age of the Wolf." In Hindu terminology, it is the Kali Yuga (literally, "age of vice," or "age of the demon"). This Age is characterized by strife, moral debasement, and spiritual inertia. Even more specifically, tradition teaches that modern man finds himself near the end of the last Age, for it is said that the Dark Age began long ago, before what we know as 'recorded history' even began. This means that we stand on the last stretch of a long descent into a dark and treacherous valley, at the center of which is the final chaos.

This is not some rash proclamation that the Apocalypse is upon us, as we would find on a pamphlet handed out on a street-corner. We should in fact be very cautious about trying to precisely predict the end of things. We can prophesy an end, since that much is metaphysically undeniable, and we can identify characteristics that will necessarily accompany it, which is what we have been doing here, but to preach that the end is coming tomorrow or next year—this is all a bit simpleminded, resulting from literalistic readings of scripture that have no respect for symbolism.

The ages may last for many thousands of years. To say that we are in the last phase of the last Age is not to speak with any kind of precision. There is really no reason to suspect that the end of our current period is imminent. Nor are we concerned about that kind of knowledge—for it is, in truth, better not to know and not to try to know.

Why, then, do we dwell so much on this doctrine? The real significance of this knowledge, for us, lies in its interpretive value, because all traditions assumed that certain characteristics accompany each age and make it distinct from those before or after.

Each epoch and each civilization is therefore unique—history can never repeat itself. Looking at the characteristics of the Dark Age, we can then understand our environment, adjusting our expectations and guiding our actions accordingly so as to avoid the mad confusion that afflicts our contemporaries due to the fact that they are in no way acquainted with the reality of their situation. After all, it is also said that spiritual methodology alters throughout the ages. At one point man spoke directly to God, at another, he can hardly admit God's existence. By understanding how and why this is the case, we can further understand why the religions provide the means of spiritual realization that they do, and what techniques might be most effective. We learn about our historical situation, not in order to fear the Apocalypse, but simply in order to know ourselves as deeply as possible, so that we may pursue, based on this self-knowledge, our spiritual development.

Characteristics of the Kali Yuga.

Because the Hindu doctrine tends to state this matter in its clearest and most detailed form, we will here list a few of the developments which manifest themselves in the Kali Yuga, and which demonstrate its presence. Remember that, in the Hindu doctrine, the bull of Dharma has been reduced from four legs to only one, which suggests a cosmic destabilization, causing morality and spiritual vitality to deteriorate. Consider your current surroundings as you reflect on the following prophecies, which are but a few:

> *Rulers will stop promoting spiritual truths among their people.*
>
> *Some will claim that it is not even the responsibility of rulers to promote religion.*
>
> *Greed, a vice of the lower castes, will reach to the rulers.*
>
> *Avarice itself will prevail among the people.*
>
> *Ignorance of the moral law becomes normal.*
>
> *People begin to think it natural to hate one another.*
>
> *Sexuality will come to be seen as central to life.*

Making and breaking of vows will occur in quick succession.

The castes will mingle, and men will take work according to chance and necessity rather than according to the nature of each individual.

Individualism will prevail over all social ordering, and the family itself will cease to exist.

The use of the term "generation" in the Gospels.

The word *genea,* used repeatedly by Christ while lamenting the state of mankind, is translated in English bibles as "generation." Due to the belief of our contemporaries in the perspicuity of scripture, this term, a loose translation at best, is then taken in its most superficial meaning, assumed to mean nothing more than "those men alive and surrounding me at this moment," since that is how we use the word today. Yet this renders much of Christ's speech meaningless or absurd. When Christ speaks of the apocalypse and then says that "this generation will by no means pass away until all these things are accomplished," his words become nonsense if taken in that narrow and superficial sense. The term, then, must have a deeper meaning. Either that or he is simply mistaken, which, needless to say, is not an acceptable proposition for any Christian.

Some interpreters, noting the problematic nature of such a narrow definition, suggest that a more appropriate interpretation for *genea* might be "race." This is closer to the truth, but only if we take it to mean the human race as a whole, and not just one race in particular. Modern confusions aside, then, we should understand the term *genea* to signify a specific chronological category which includes not only the contemporaries of Christ, but also those living thousands of years later, extending even to the end of time. In short, it makes the most sense to take the word "generation" to signify each of the Four Ages; and, from the way Christ specifically links his "generation" with the "fullness of time" as well as the "last days," it is quite obvious that he is identifying ours as the final Age—or, as we have just said, the Dark Age.

Sins of the fathers.

This interpretation clarifies the oft-repeated saying of the Old Testament about God "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." The meaning now begins to take shape. The sins of the Adam's generation (the Golden Age), are to be visited upon his children's children through all subsequent periods, even to the third and fourth (Bronze and Iron) generations. Opting to translate these passages using the term 'race' instead of 'generation', the meaning becomes easier to grasp and conveys what we have said about each age producing (or 'generating') a certain human type, and so we would have the 'race of Adam' and so on, down to the third and fourth *generation*, or 'unique human type *generated* by the ambient conditions of the Age'.

A historical difficulty.

If we agree that we are indeed in the Dark Age, a follow-up question might be: *When did this period begin and the previous one end?*

Specific dates cannot be given, simply due to the very nature of the problem of changing conditions throughout the ages. The methods used by modern science to 'date' artifacts are dependent on static conditions in the environment. For example, carbon dating assumes a constant rate of radioactive decay over time. In other words, the map of history proposed by science is dependent on the physical and mental conditions of the *here and now* and if these conditions turn out to be dynamic throughout all of history, then the map is invalid. The traditional theory of time, on the other hand, assumes constantly shifting conditions, and this tends to render incomprehensible the nature of previous Ages, making their very existence difficult to perceive, and indeed this is why we find that modern science is completely incapable of reaching beyond a certain point in the past. The story of human history proposed by science is therefore only sufficient for examining periods and peoples very close to us on the timeline. Eventually a 'barrier' is encountered and at that point the 'evidence' seems to evaporate and become undetectable to the tools we have developed for the purpose of measurement.

Barriers separating this age from the previous.

Despite the aforementioned difficulties, we can at least point to some specific historical events that are capable of telling us a bit

about our own Age. For example, we can use the very limitation of our "scientific historians" to vaguely identify the beginning of our present Age. The physical and spiritual shifts will erect a "wall" at a certain point, past which our historians will be unable to see. If we can identify one such "wall," we can approximate the genesis of this period. And indeed we can clearly identify this wall, somewhere near the 6th century B.C. It is here, according to our enlightened experts, that 'pre-history' ends and 'history' begins, which is a way of saying that, although history existed for thousands of years before, it is here that it finally becomes somewhat comprehensible to us. We do, of course, know something about older civilizations like Egypt, Babylon, and particularly the Far East, but our understanding of those peoples is so far removed that our experts are wise not to include them in their "historical" timeline.

Cleansing waters.

Although we have said that the genesis of our Age could be no nearer than the Greek period, we would also be unwise to assume that it could also be *no further* than that period. In fact, it seems most likely that the 6th century B.C. signifies not the beginning of the Dark Age, but, more accurately, the beginning of the final phase of that era, and this would imply that the Dark Age itself had been in progress for some time previously. The precise beginning, however, begins to melt into myth as we move further into the past, and so it is precisely into myth we must go to find it, as techniques like "carbon dating" and archeology are now categorically useless to us. To find the genesis of this Age, then, we might be wise to look to the text of Genesis, which relates a tale told round the globe—a tale of a great flood. Although this is not the place to expand, we find that all peoples around the world speak of this same flood, usually placing after it profound changes in the world and the life of man. It is here, amidst global cataclysmic geographical and ecological shifts, even extending to dramatic decreases in the human lifespan, that we must look to find the true "beginning" of our present era.

Genesis of the modern period.

We have said that there were four Ages and that ours is the last. We have said that this last age, the Dark Age or Kali Yuga, had its beginning at the Great Flood to which all peoples round the globe trace their origins. Further, we have said that within the Dark Age itself there are smaller divisions, and that the latest division lies near the Greek civilization which marks what we call the "historical

period." Very good—we are getting very close to man's current location! But now we must dissect this "historical period" itself, for it is very clear that the contemporary man is of a very different character than his ancestor who lived in Greek or Rome. He thinks differently, feels differently, in many ways inversely, than his predecessor, whom we will call "traditional man." We find that traditional man is in many ways as incomprehensible to the modern mind as Egypt is to the modern historian. And there again lies our key: we know that in times of profound shift a wall of incomprehensibility is erected, rendering the men on one side alien to those on the other. Can we find one such wall within historical times?—identifying for us the moment at which traditional man died and "modern man" was born?

For the western world, Tradition died with the Middle Ages. The famous movements known as the Renaissance ("rebirth") and the Reformation were really nothing but manifestations of death. Just as a lifeless corpse might expand and disperse into the ground through the process of putrefaction, so the decaying civilization may heave and display agitation, in a sort of mockery of life, even though it is deceased and dissolving into the earth. The false nature of the productions of the Renaissance is betrayed in the simple fact that they are but imitations of the superficial characteristics of a period far superior and ancient—the Greek. Renaissance art is simple nostalgia, just as an old man speaks dreamingly of the days of his youth. After all, we would not call his daydreaming a "rebirth" just because the dreams were beautiful, would we?—No, we would take it instead as proof that little life was left in him and that, with little life to look forward to, he was trying to find some joy in a lost and distant past. The Reformation, on the other hand, resembled the decay of death in a much more obvious fashion. No one would deny that it worked upon the unity of the "body" which was Christendom in the same manner, slowly breaking it down into fragments until, as we are seeing today, there remains little but the "molecule" of the individual believer. No body, no unity, only the constituent parts in their separation—"to dust" the church has returned.

The extinction of certain types.

As civilization transforms and man conforms to the set of altered conditions, the prevailing human type becomes unsuited for survival in the new environment. He becomes as alien to it as it is hostile to him. As a result, a new type of humanity comes into being that is better adjusted to the conditions of a new age or era. This can

be identified via the presence or absence of concepts or else the inability of historical periods to understand one another, as if they were ‘from another planet’ or were an entirely different species, so odd do they seem. Consider, for example, the fact that ‘wisdom,’ in the traditional sense, really has no place in modernity. It is not discussed, publicly pursued (either as a matter of education or as a matter of ‘popular culture’), and the class of beings who were once considered its embodiment are set aside as ‘useless’. The class we have in mind just now is the elderly. The elderly have traditionally played the part of guardian and disseminator of wisdom. So what of the elderly in the modern world? We find that the aged have no place, no role, here in our civilization. They are ‘in the way’ more often than not. Our social structures are utterly hostile to the old man, and this is a necessary corollary of our total lack of appreciation for the social value of wisdom, or of its basic meaning, for that matter. When the prevailing system rejects or demotes the value of wisdom—the human manifestation of the principle is necessarily devalued as well. Thus, the elderly are becoming ‘extinct’ in a practical sense, since their participation in modern life is drastically minimized and even their bodies are systematically removed from view as much as possible, even if they still technically ‘exist’ in society. Someday this might no longer be the case.

The disbandment of the warriors.

In speaking of 'extinct' vocations or types, we can also say that the modern world has no place for the traditional warrior type in either its philosophy or social structure. As with the elderly, the modern mentality isolates and destroys this type; but unlike the elderly who represent a stage man cannot yet avoid, the warrior represents instead a particular vocational path, and so unlike old age, a vocational path can be circumvented and removed completely. The process is convoluted and requires a more detailed overview than we intend to provide in this section but suffice it to say that extinct types are usually replaced by a surrogate, and in this case the 'warrior' has been replaced by the 'soldier'. Every modern nation possesses the latter in great abundance--the former only in a veiled way and as an anomaly. Because of this, we can use those historical events which represent the destruction of the warrior path as another set of 'markers' which identify the genesis of the modern world and the death of the traditional spirit that animated the Middle Ages as it animates all traditional worlds. For examples, we can point to two very clear markers of this type, one in the West, and one in the East. These are the chivalric knight, and the samurai.

Chivalric orders of medieval Europe.

In the West, the warrior ideal was embodied by the chivalric military orders of medieval Christendom. The highest of these was the Order of the Temple, also called the 'Knight Templar,' whose rule was authored by none other than St. Bernard. Such a path man was considered one of the holiest of all vocations, for the Templars were ascetics as well as fighters, and their initiatory vows resembled that of the priesthood: poverty, chastity, piety, and obedience. Under the influence of King Philip IV of France, members of this order were arrested, tortured, and burned alive on charges of treason. In 1312, pressure reached a sufficient level to coerce Pope Clement into issuing bulls to disband the order, the remaining members of which were absorbed into other groups, retired, or lived in exile. This event serves as a marker because it represents both an usurpation of spiritual authority by a temporal power (the king disbanding an order over which only the pope ought to have had authority), and a destruction of a traditional ideal—two violent deaths which point to a rupture of worlds.

The samurai of Japan.

The Japanese samurai represent the Eastern parallel to medieval knighthood. Their vocation presented the same hallmarks of a traditional warrior vocation. The samurai followed a strict rule of dress, behavior, honor, and diet; and they too slowly found themselves amidst a civilization which had neither use nor room for their ideals, and which eventually swept them from the face of the earth, not without violence. The transition from warrior to soldier came much later in the East than in the West, and in fact it seems that it was the direct result of Western intervention. Japan had, as everyone knows, maintained a policy of isolation, protecting itself, its personality, and its traditions from modernist encroachment. Eventually the outside world could no longer tolerate such rejection. In 1853, United States war ships arrived on Japanese shores and demanded access to trade. The tactics of intimidation used are easily found in history books. The Japanese capitulated in the shadow of this foreign power, and sweeping modernizations followed almost immediately. One of those modernizations was the dissolution of the samurai class in favor of firearms and other up-to-date military technologies. So quickly did the Japanese 'catch up' to the rest of the developed nations that by external appearances it is impossible to tell that Japan had ever resisted the modern transformation. In some ways Japan shocked the world by surpassing even the most

powerful nations with its 'advance,' which is to say, its cultural and spiritual defeat.

When and where.

We have completed our introductory chronological approximation, placing man within the "modern" era, specifically toward the end of the Dark Age, also called the Iron Age or *Kali Yuga*. We have answered the question "When?" Now we must answer the question: "Where?"—in the specifically geographical sense. At present we find ourselves in the United States, and so it might be reasonable to assume that, beyond my own family, most of those who encounter this manual will also be Americans. The United States is perhaps the most 'modern' of all modern nations, and even if that is not the case it is certainly the most outspoken proponent of the basic tenets of modernity: namely, Progress, Technology, Materialism, Liberty and Equality. The United States is the intellectual product of the Enlightenment, and the religious product of the Reformation. When you live in such a nation, at such a time, you have certain advantages. You will be able to see the unfolding of the Dark Age 'from the driver's seat', which is to say, in terms of cause and effect, you would be situated at the level of *causes*. If you were in a third world country, you would find yourself situated at the level of *consequences*, suffering mostly the secondary results of what has transpired in the developed world. Yet, that very advantage will also be your disadvantage. You are too close to the thing, and it is too familiar. The very symptoms of decadence and dissolution are second nature to you, so you will have difficulty bringing them into focus. What I point out as a sign of decay, you will have been trained to see as a proof of advancement, a badge of honor. For example, the Renaissance, which from the point of view of this manual ought to be considered the moment of death for normal civilization in the West, has always, from the point of view of the modern world, been celebrated as a moment of birth. John Locke is a new Moses leading the new chosen people out of their religious 'captivity' of ignorance into the Promised Land of liberty, equality, and secularism. Nonetheless, I think you will not find these difficulties impossible to overcome. After all, I can only assume that you've read this far because it has made some amount of sense to you. Just remember, as we move forward in our discussion, that you are on the crest of a giant wave; and although the exhilaration and beauty of your present elevated circumstances may certainly offer you a blissful view of the horizon, you might also ask what worlds have been

crushed and buried deep beneath your feet, and what destruction looms ahead.

The long night.

How does one cope with this situation? We will get much deeper into this question in a later section of this manual. For now, the best advice came from Christ, given to his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Stay awake." How easily we are lulled to sleep throughout our lives. That's your first task—to be awake. You'll find it hard enough. After all it is the goal of every ascetic practice and the essence of every spiritual discipline there ever was—to be found still burning your oil at the end of the *long night*. Begin there. Complacence and inner inertia are deadly. Inner stagnation is in fact the best explanation for all the external agitation you see around you. Men who can maintain a healthy balance between internal lucidity and external activity are at peace with themselves, they have harmonized their body, soul, and mind. Those who lose the balance fall into existential lopsidedness, and this usually amounts to a lifetime of mindless agitation. On the broad social level this leads to the cult of "busy-ness," the obsession with "hard work"—only a world that has lost the concept of contemplation could elevate vain activity and economic drudgery to the status of virtues in themselves. "Still waters run deep," the saying goes. When was the last time you stood still long enough for the surface of your consciousness to come to rest? The average person today knows nothing of stillness and spends each day splashing around frantically trying to find something secure to hold onto. This is why the Greek Fathers in particular developed the concept of 'watchfulness'—they knew that everything hinges not so much on action as lucidity—and that *lucid action* has the potential to be meaningful. Your experience will be no different, if you can avoid being taken in, overrun and lured into a semi-conscious life.

Signs of the Times.

If what we've said above is true then certain results, trends, and transformations will naturally follow. If this is the Dark Age, we should expect certain signs to accompany it, representing the establishment of *conditions* specific to this age. I will enumerate these conditions briefly, meaning that I will not so much explain them as state them since the bulk of this manual constitutes their elaboration.

Reduction.

Things fall apart. This is the universal law. Everything for modern man is an impoverishment of what was before. This law of dissolution affects both the visible and the invisible realities of the world. We might also use the term 'negation', and say that the modern world can be described in terms of what is absent or missing, in the same way that disorder and sin imply the absence of order and perfection—a deviation from a course. This reduction can be likened to those processes of breakdown which accompany death and which result in a movement away from the unified whole which is broken down into its various constituent parts—what was once an organic whole disintegrated until it is broken down into the smallest possible units and cannot disintegrate any further. This explanation accounts for many of the social phenomena that many contemporary writers lament, but usually they are described in a haphazard fashion, using terms like materialism, nihilism, positivism, scientism, etc., but they all have a common root cause. What is materialism, after all, but the inability to see anything but the lowest order of reality?—the lowest grade of significance in every phenomenon? Materialism sees nothing that those before did not see—man has always seen the corporeal makeup of things. Materialism is not some new vision—it is a new blindness. When materialism prevails, the vision of reality accounts for the corporeal order *and nothing else*. Hence, the term nihilism is closely linked to materialism, since a philosophy of *meaning*, when it can only work with the lowest level of things, with only the most superficial, immediately must decay into a philosophy of no meaning whatsoever. This is the abyss, and reduction is the path leading to it.

Quantity.

Reduction is evident in the way modern man has become incapable of making qualitative judgments of any kind. Quality has been reduced almost entirely to quantity; or, said another way, the only 'quality' men are now capable of conceiving lies in measures of quantity. This is the basis of the political theory of democracy, which teaches that truth is not discovered by discerning the qualities of things, but is decided via a quantity, in this case, 'majority rule', and truth becomes equivalent to whatever is the majority opinion. The 'quantitative worldview' is also at the heart of the socio-economic obsession leading nations to direct all their policies and efforts toward production and exchange, assuming that quality of life is directly proportional to the quantity of goods produced and

consumed. In America, this sort of 'quantity monomania' has developed so far as to have created an entirely new form of aristocracy based on quantitative accumulation. No other civilization in history equated wealth accumulation with worth or virtue. Ancient kings were wealthy because they were believed to be kingly men, to be *superior men*, but they were never considered superior simply because they were good at accumulating wealth. Wealth may be a consequence of superiority, but it is not *evidence* of it. In our modern money aristocracy the traditional principle is reversed: men become kings simply because they are wealthy, and nobility and wealth mean precisely the same thing. This does not bode well for the poor, who are likewise appraised according to their aptitude for wealth accumulation (which is of course inferior) rather than any qualitative measure based on virtue, nobility, dignity, social function, etc. Such is the result of an outlook on life that discerns quantity instead of quality. Indeed, the modern term "quality of life" itself is measured entirely by quantities: life expectancy, income, years of education, etc. Set this in contrast to the ancient wisdom that saw something *demonic* in quantitative obsessions. Consider the Old Testament prohibitions against census-taking. The counting of heads, which seems so normal to our understanding, would have seemed perverse to the Hebrew people who could sense the underlying truth of the matter. Even today it is possible to encounter this sensitivity in certain less developed societies. There are shepherds alive today who will tell you that more animals die when the herd is regularly counted, as opposed to when they are left to themselves. It is probably no coincidence that Christ came at the time of a great census. There is just something infernal in quantitative reductions, and something like a 'social security number' would likely have horrified a traditional people. Further, modern man seeks quantity not only in his pursuits, but in his fears as well. When he thinks of his extinction he thinks of overpopulation. He thinks of emissions and temperature changes, both quantifiable measures. He thinks of these things because he senses the presence of a danger but cannot discern its nature because its subtlety surpasses his impoverished perception; and so he concentrates on superficialities. He concentrates on those things which, although they present truths of a sort, are only the most exterior and secondary aspects of the spiritual darkness he feels enveloping him.

Materialization.

We can speak of a lower limit beyond which this *reductionism* cannot proceed. This limit is the material plane of atomization, the point at which every composite is reduced to its smallest parts.[3]

Notice that here we speak of *materialization* rather than *materialism*.

Materialism is a mode of thought, a particular mentality, and it will be examined later. For now, we are more concerned with materialization, which is a process of 'solidification.' If man's reality was once experienced primarily in terms of *being*, and only secondarily or subordinately in terms of the visible realm of *becoming*, the process of materialization means that the visible, corporeal order will encroach upon man's perception of the invisible and finally overwhelm it—depriving him of spiritual sightedness, of the ability to sense things relating to essence and *being*—and this will continue to such a degree that he will sooner or later forget that anything exists beyond the physical.

Thus, we can say that materialism is a product of this progressive materialization, which is itself only one aspect of the overall process of cosmic dissolution. It cannot be stressed enough, however, that we are not only concerned with man's perception, which would make this a subjective observation that does not have a bearing on the world, which is to say, the objects of perception. This would be misleading. Man does not simply become more materialistic in a subjective sense, as if the world around him were remaining unchanged throughout the centuries. Both orders change together, and, in a way, he has a valid excuse for becoming blind to that which transcends the corporeal.

Remember earlier that the visible and the invisible realms are *enmeshed*, and so the things that happen to man on the inside are at the same time happening to the physical and external. If man's perception becomes primarily material, it is indeed due to the decay of his spiritual awareness, but at the same time, the exterior world is changing in precisely the same way. He loses awareness of the spiritual because the spiritual *withdraws*. He forgets the gods because the gods themselves retreat to Valhalla, or to Avalon, or to

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[3] We are aware of the fact that atoms are not actually elementary particles, much less are they indivisible. This is just a manner of speaking.

some other mythical domain, all of them symbolizing this transformation.

The Christian doctrine of the Garden of Eden and the Fall convey this truth by saying that, at the moment of *disunion*, death entered not just into the subjective awareness of man, but into the world as a totality.

To say it another way, man's perception gradually becomes more focused on the physical plane because the physical plane itself *solidifies* around him as if he were being encased in a shell. If at one time the spiritual was visible through the medium of the physical, the physical loses its transparency and becomes opaque. As a result, man begins to experience his physical body as his predominant reality, as the entirety of his world.

We can say then that as man loses touch with or, out of negligence, disregards his spiritual development, his physicality expands and compensates for the loss, dominating his sense of meaning.

The narrative of the Fall teaches us a moral lesson, yes, but more profoundly it teaches the relationship between anthropology and cosmology, and that the world fell with man. It was Adam who caused the world around him to be reduced to the physical—and it is man who to this day works to solidify himself and all things in such a way that, while God made man in his image, man has produced a world in *his* image, increasingly disordered, materializing, and collapsing.

Can we really blame the modern man, in such circumstances, for his obliviousness to all things invisible? The law of gravity, for him, is more pressing than any commandment, the cold of winter more piercing than any beatific vision. We cannot excuse him but at the same time we hesitate to blame him for his limited perceptions. The stone is *more solid* for him than it was for his ancestor—how could he possibly believe that for Moses it produced running water.

Unity and uniformity.

Some have recognized the problem of atomization on the social level, and there are frequent attempts to correct the disintegration of the social body and bring together again what has been fragmented, making true 'communities' possible once again.

Unfortunately, the attempts seem to mistake unity, which would be healthy, with uniformity, which is something else altogether.

The human body is a *unity*—a coordinated and functional whole capable of feeling itself united with its component parts. Hence, I speak of my hand as *my hand*. In the unified setting of a vigorous community, we find the same identification of one part with another, hence *my neighbor* and *our city*.

Alternatively, a handful of dust is called a *uniformity*—a collection of similar particles brought into contact only circumstantially and held together artificially, but not unified in a meaningful way and incapable of possessing an identity. Instead of *my neighbor,* members of society are *individuals* held together by material necessity and cooperating mostly by force of law.

Although there are many aspects to this issue, one of the major distinctions between unity and uniformity is that the former possesses both identity and diversity, in the same way that the body has hands, feet, and head, and is empowered by diversity. Uniformity, on the contrary, is a mere *collectivity*, similar everywhere with little discernible variation, either in function or aesthetic. The 'social body' is composed of a hundred thousand right-hands, and an entire town might be sustained by the employment of one or two large industries.

The socio-political make-up of the Middle Ages, with its centrifugal tendencies, resulted in a varied spectrum of local *personalities*. Today there is no such thing as variation. Every American city has a Wal-Mart, a McDonalds. This is not unity—this has nothing at all to do with unity—it is uniformity: this is the handful of dust, coordinated and consumed by a carefully engineered industrial machine. It is the role of the individual, for the most part expendable, to manage this machine, and within the economic collectivity, no part can be differentiated from any other part, either cities or persons.

The traditional ideal is one of unity, since only unity brings about cooperation and community while at the same time permitting variation enough to satisfy the daunting range of human personalities and vocations. For the traditionalist, each community member plays a different role within one great web of meaning, and from the point of view, uniformity is a sign of death.

We speak of uniformity, but this process can also be referred to as 'individuation' since, instead of supporting the emergence of human *personality*, it demands its suppression, since no machine can operate on a *fuel* that is varied, since in this context variation is equivalent to *imperfection*.

Industrial society does not need personalities, it needs employees. It needs a homogenous 'workforce' of machinery attendees, cash register operators, elementary school students with good grades who can all follow the same textbook. Uniqueness and variation lead to breakdown and inefficiency, and so industrialism seeks the disappearance of all uniqueness. It seeks uniformity, and it succeeds.

Pope Francis recently lamented the fact that the earth was becoming a perfect 'sphere' with no one place retaining any mark or contour distinguishing it from all the others. Adopting this geometrical representation, he argued for the ideal of the polyhedron:

> "Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the center, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness."[4]

Ivan Illich provided another image. He spoke of the 'funnel' system currently at work, driving everything together into a mass; he called instead for the image of a 'web'—a network widely dispersed susceptible to irregularities and imperfection, but all hanging together in a delicate, organic, and beautiful accord, all with a shared meaning and purpose.

Inversion.

All these conditions combine to produce a unique perspective in modern man, a perspective which is the reverse of what traditional man would call *normal*, and which is indeed the precise inverse of the true order of reality. Whereas ancient man perceived the invisible as more profound than the material, his subsequent and on-going *materialization* rendered the invisible realm nonexistent, leading to the elevation of the visible order in his consciousness.

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[4] *Evangelii Gaudium*, 236.

Reduction, which we mentioned first, produces an inversion of values, and the latter follows necessarily from the former, just as Lucifer (representing the denial of the hierarchy and all that is *superior*) eventually became Satan (representing the inversion of the true order of things, the lower actively usurping the place of the higher). To refuse to accept that which is above might begin in indifference but it ends in blasphemy—this is a law.

As an example of *denial* followed by *inversion*, or, to use the above terminology, *Luciferianism* followed by *Satanism*, we can frame the evolution of Western political philosophy as follows:

The ancients, and Catholicism after them, taught that governmental power *descends* from heaven; modern man, having first lost the perception of the heavenly, teaches that governmental authority *ascends* from below, from the people, the *demos*. Denial, and then inversion. This tendency follows naturally from the process of reduction, and reversal of proper hierarchy almost always follow when realities are reduced to their lowest orders (reduction).

Consider almost all of modern man's pursuits, particularly education, in which the entire world of the transcendent, even the science of aesthetics and beauty, is excluded or minimized, and children are nourished on formulas and piles of data devoid of any real *meaning*. In fact, what the ancients meant by 'true' is entirely absent from the contemporary educational mentality, wherein *the true* is limited to what is empirically demonstrable.

The consequence of this inversion is that our vocabulary itself becomes confused and the paths to meaning are obscured. For example, in order to find an authentic tradition (in our sense) we might be forced to undertake a thorough rejection of the pseudo-traditions of our own society. To show respect for truth, we might have to disrespect the authority of our elders as counterfeit and groundless, basing itself, as it does, on the inferior rather than the superior. To find religion, we may be forced to avoid respected religious teachers.

Do not take this as an argument for the shameful idea that one can be 'spiritual but not religious', which is completely ridiculous. What we mean here is simply that modern churches have, by and large, been consumed by the modern mentality and suffered their own kind of reduction and subsequent inversion of truth. Protestantism is itself a symbol of this fact, where there is no longer any such thing

as authority or unity, and where each man is now elevated to the level of priest. A better case for the process could not be identified: Luther reduced institutionalized religion to the level of the individual, throwing off the shackles of authority, destroying the traditional hierarchy. This destruction bred a new and false type of authority, the authority of each and every private individual to pronounce and to teach any idea that seems true. Religion, after Luther, became democratized. Authority was not simply *removed* but was *replaced* by a counterfeit—the process of reduction and then inversion was complete. Look for this process around you, and you will find that more examples readily present themselves.

The supra-individual nature of the thing.

Now, a bit of advice as to how you might approach the world in light of this data.

First and foremost, you should accept at once that there is no 'man behind the curtain', no mastermind adjusting those gears which you see grinding men into nothing. This evil is beyond you, in the sense that you cannot truly stop it. There is no villain to fight and no dragon to heroically kill. You can *withstand* it, of course, and therein lies the whole warrior-ascetic vocation—but you cannot destroy this force or reverse the work being done, any more than you can 'turn back the clock' on history.

The evil we describe is supra-human. Do not, therefore, mistake your neighbor for the devil. He is capable of evil acts, as are you, as are we all, and some of us more than others, but no one person or group or movement could possibly shoulder the blame for all of this. To try and 'locate' your enemy in anything more than a relative sense will only lead you to exaggerate human evils and lash out day after day at men who may be participating in the chaos, but whose powers you vastly overestimate by assuming they actually know what they are doing.

Ambient disorder.

These conditions are *inescapable* in terms of your lived experience,[5] and you will need to accept this in the same way that you would have to reconcile yourself with a permanent bodily affliction. Chaos and

[5] We are not ignoring the possibilities of spiritual realization and method, which of course present ways of finding peace in this life. We are simply addressing a specific context and 'the facts' of the human condition.

materialization characterize your life: body, soul, and spirit. You may find respite in contemplation or in communion with like-minded people, but for the most part, the very air you breathe will impart a sense of agitation, dispersing your concentration. This will cause you pain, and you will want to seek out and destroy the source, and you will find many things and people to blame for it, and perhaps this is justified, but the true source is not in the men around you, but in the qualitative character of the Dark Age. The world itself may feel alien to you, but this is not because it is not what it should be, but because you are not what you should be, and because you are likely of a particular spiritual temperament that puts you even more at odds with your ambiance than other people you encounter, such that they will never understand your *natural alienation*. You must acclimate to this chaos without being consumed by it and learn to acknowledge it while at the same time working to overcome it from within, since only in your spiritual depths are you truly *beyond its reach*. You were born in the *long night*, and it does no good to demand the sun. It cannot come. It sets according to providential laws that are not for you to comprehend, put in place since the foundation of the world. You can only work to realize the light that is in you, and your vocation is not to bring back the day, but to light the darkness, knowing all the while that it is indeed within this darkness that you must live and breathe, however stifling it is to breathe it.

Avoidance of romanticism.

Any student of the traditional doctrine faces a danger when approaching history.

If the danger for modern 'progressives' is their tendency toward *condescension*, the danger for us is a tendency toward *romanticism*. Instead of worshipping 'human progress' and looking at the past with an arrogant self-satisfaction, we might tend to view historical periods through *rose-colored glasses*, and the more distant the event, the rosier the tint. This error is perhaps less harmful since it permits us to appreciate what good is present in distant ages, but both tendencies will skew the truth by exaggerating certain qualities of the past either for better or for worse. We must be wary of this. We do ourselves no favors by harboring our own illusions.

Part of this stems from over-generalization, extending a certain area of superiority to everything. Having discerned the superiority of some previous civilizations in the area of *doctrine*, we too easily

grant them—without thought or justification—a corresponding superiority in manners, social conditions, leadership, or discipline. Often this is all true, because true principles (provided by the doctrine) are more likely to lead to proper applications in the sphere of action and governance; but it is also true that human nature, no matter what point in history we address, is subject to the conditions of the Dark Age, and man is morally weak and prone to stupidity and violence as far as the historical eye can see.

Even during those epochs that possessed and promoted an authentic doctrine, and which seemed on the social level to have been well-ordered (such as the Middle Ages), we should not assume that daily life was colored by a respect for justice and that men all loved one another any more than what we see before us today. Right principles support right action, but they never guarantee it. Even when this translation is successful, it is never *completely* successful. We have already noted and rejected the prejudice of the moderns toward history. My warning to you at the outset is to be wary of the opposite prejudice in yourself.

The science of history and the historical sense.

Since we spend so much time speaking of history, it would be good to offer a few remarks on how best to approach this subject. Or, to put it bluntly, is it even legitimate that we interpret history at all, since we are not professional historians?

First, we should admit that deliberate study is always important, and that it is ignorant to speak about anything unless one has 'done the reading'. However, we can also say that in order to discern the meaning of events, more than general erudition is required. One must possess an awareness of analogy and correspondence, not to mention a balanced intuition, that allows him to get beyond 'the facts' while at the same time stopping short of purely poetic and imaginative interpretations of events based on sentiment and prejudice. Spengler called this 'physiognomic tact', but to avoid using his rather obscure terminology, we will refer to it as the 'historical sense'.

History should not be imagined as a constant. It is not synonymous with 'the past.' The past is constant, but in itself it is inaccessible to us. What is accessible to us is *history*, and history is in this sense *the relationship between the past and present*, and because the present is always changing, so is that relationship.

When it comes to the general view of history accepted by a given civilization, what we have is a *history-picture*, which is *creative production* based on the historical sense possessed by that civilization.

To put it another way, we only 'do history' within the context of our own vocabulary and conceptual framework, so that no matter how intelligent we are, and no matter how many ancient documents we unearth, we will 'modernize' what we find as soon as we begin to interpret it and give it meaning. To propose to write history 'as it really happened' is childishness. *History* is always an expression of the soul, and that remains true whether we are dealing with the work of a particular historian, or the larger, more generalized *history-picture* used by a civilization to explain itself to itself.

Consensus is meaningful, but it is not everything. If this or that interpretation of an event in the past happens to become the consensus of the 'experts of history' in the modern West, this may tell us something about that event, but it tells us just as much, sometimes more, about the spirit of the modern West and its way of interpreting things.

Consensus does not mean objectivity, not in any field, but especially in history. Consensus only imparts rank, which is to say it grants priority to a certain interpretation over others, while the lack of consensus deprives an idea of rank. Ideas of the highest rank in any society are not true in the absolute sense but are always true expressions of the spirit of that time and place.

We need to admit a kind of relativity to truth in history. We must do this because, as was said already, history is not a set of facts but rather a relationship between past and present, and relationships vary by time and place and person. A certain history-picture will therefore be true for the type of person to whom it conveys its meaning, but it will not be true for another type of person who belongs to a different time or place or culture, not because its meaning has changed but because the type of person we are dealing with has changed.

We could also say that history is always objective and subjective at the same time. These are its aspects, and a history-picture is the result of the unique relationship between these two aspects. The relationship is determined by the spirit of the culture, and this is why it will always vary *without necessarily becoming false*.

An example of the relativity of history and history-pictures: today we look upon the ancients, like Plutarch, who were respected as historians within their own world, and we see naïve storytellers with no sense of scientific inquiry or method. This tells us less about them than it does about ourselves.

Perhaps it would be better to say that there is not a single 'historical sense' that the historian must possess in order to produce history, but that the historical sense itself is what varies by time and place. Does this mean that there is no such thing as error in historical interpretation? Of course not. What it does mean is that we need to allow for a multiplicity of human types, each with its own way of understanding meaning, and without denying that some history-pictures are more accurate than others, while some are downright delusional, we should not be so narrow as to assume that there is only one formulation good now and always, and try to retroactively just a different civilization's interpretation of history and of itself just because it is not identical to our own.

The West is in some way super-conscious of its own historical origins. Due to its situation, it differs from past cultures in that it 'sees' its beginnings and has evidence of those beginnings. Whereas cultures of the past could rest in myth, which was a kind of supra-historical narrative and which explained man to himself more totally, and not only 'materially', the modern man of the West is tied to one or another version of 'recorded history', and while it would seem that this kind of availability of information about ones actual origins would be more comfortable since more tangible, it actually brings him into a very intense relationship with his own history and the facts and figures tied to it. There is a disproportion between the quantity of available facts and the range of meanings he is able to draw from them.

To say it another way, he has more 'evidence' available but finds that he is unable to utilize it to answer his most pressing questions. In the past, the reverse was true. The ancients may have had very little in terms of museum-pieces, but they possessed a myth-narrative capable of providing a very thorough anthropology, even when it skimmed over historical fact.

Because Western man can, at least theoretically, grasp his own history in this unprecedentedly concrete way, he feels compelled to do so. He fixates on the material, and in this sense his history-picture becomes *materialistic*. Moreover, since the facts are

plentiful, he begins to assume that the entirety of the history-picture can be produced from this data alone. He has been working feverishly on this project since the birth of the modern world, but is his material up to the task? Does it lend itself to the production of *meaning*? Or is he, so to speak, trying to 'sculpt with watercolors'?

It should be clear by now that any attempt to assess the data of history necessitates a creative process. Anyone who thinks they have all of the facts presented to them and that history is self-explanatory is a 'believer' and not a knower. This person takes what they are given and does not actively participate in their own understanding of history.

When interpreting historical data, there are physical facts, such as location, names, materials, and so on; secondly, there are events, which are things that happen in the stream of time. While the physical facts are usually straightforward and for the most part accessible to anyone whether or not they possess the historical sense, events are not.

The meaning conveyed by a history-picture also depends on the type of questions we have in mind before we even look at the evidence. As with any intellectual endeavor, the answers will be determined ahead of time by the questions. The West is characterized by its tendency toward action rather than contemplation. It wants to know what it ought to do, it wants to hold and to manipulate and to accumulate. Based on these impulses it approaches history with a certain set of questions, questions that may not have been shared by previous civilizations. Why should we be shocked, then, when the West finds very different answers, and that its history picture conveys a very different category of meaning?

Since the West, consciously or not, looks to history in order to understand how it should direct its *compulsion to act*, it derives from history a sense of *mission*. Included in its history-picture is not simply an interpretation of what came before, but also an intimation of its imagined future destiny, hence the temptation toward world-mission and delusions of utopia. That is why history-narratives are so important for the modern world, and so dangerous. America, for example, draws its entire identity not from what it is and does in the present but from the stories it tells itself about its history, from its history-picture, and from this it determines its destiny. Thus, by understanding itself as the beacon of liberty which overthrew

tyranny, it sees itself as an apostle of freedom meant to liberate the world, and so on.

Part of the historical sense is knowing that what is significant in a distant age is not determined by what is significant in this age. A man possessing the historical sense will take it as incredibly significant that the geocentric model was taken for granted in the Classical world, whereas the man who can only see history within the framework of modernity will see in this fact only a 'stage of development', an example of ignorance, on the way to the heliocentric model of the solar system, which is another step on the way to space travel, and so on. He is inundated with the notion of Progress, and he is only able to allow historical facts to acquire significance in light of that idea. Hence, they are only significant in light of his concerns, which is to say, their significance for the civilization he is studying has no value.

History is both linear and cyclical. It is cyclical on the whole, and as with any circle, linear if viewed only between two distinct points. This is why small minds and small-minded ages view history as only linear, since from the point on the circle at which they stand, they see a short distance in two directions, and that is all.

The idea of Progress is the product of a narrow, linear view of history which sees the past as a great chain of events leading up to the present. We stand at the apex of history and all that came before is *a priori* inferior.

The battle of history is usually presented as that between young and old, such as between some new theory and the enthroned error of previous times. This is true only within a certain period, that is to say from the linear point of view, and not true of time on the cyclical level where 'old' and 'new' make less sense, where other cultures are unfolding simultaneously and according to their own laws, and where there are rebirths of a sort. This is why we can say that certain stages occur and do not recur, but that on the whole, *history repeats itself*.

The origin of society.

We can address the 'origin of society' by way of various theories. They are not all wrong, as there is more than one 'way of putting it'. Don't get too wrapped up in the correctness of any particular theory, since anything touching *origins* must take on an aspect of *myth*. We

need only allow that in these theories what is essential is not so much their historical precision as their underlying principles, and that some are truer than others, and some are simply nonsense.

One way of putting it, used by the Catholic popes, is that the family is the fundamental unit of society. This is true and for all the reasons they say. However, another way of putting it is to say that society has its origins in the bond between men, giving rise to a hierarchical group ordered on the basis of ability and strength, mutual fidelity and risk, and that this provides the basis of civilization, and all else follows from that. This is also true, and for all the reasons they say.

We'd be in trouble if we tried to accept one and exclude the other. They go well, and they balance each other by painting the picture from a slightly different perspective. There are also many others which we won't mention.

So long as you are certain that they are true and good, it does not so much matter how many of these theories you take into consideration. You only get into trouble when you either adopt one true observation to the exclusion of other true observations, or else you allow a false one to come in and poison the whole lot.

Exclusivity and error. Those are the dangers. Inclusivity is never a problem so long as what you are including is *true* and so long as you combine these truths in such a way that they do not contradict one another but instead fit together to form a coherent and properly ordered whole. Failure to properly integrate various truths results in *syncretism* and is a result of one's inability to competently handle the material. What is to be aimed at is therefore not syncretism, but *synthesis*.

The regression of the castes.

Although it will be mentioned elsewhere, it will be helpful to introduce here the concept of the *regression of the castes*.

The four principal castes are the sacred authority (priests or *brahmins*), the royal power (princes/knights or *kshatriyas*), the merchants/tradesman (*vaishyas*), and the laborers (peasants or *shudras*). This social organization can be seen in its full development in both European feudalism and Hinduism.

In traditional civilizations based upon caste, the beginning of the end can be indicated by observing the breakdown of this hierarchy. They collapse one level at a time, from the top down.

For Europe, King Henry VIII provides for us an excellent example of the first stage of regression in which a secular authority refuses to acknowledge the spiritual authority, and then claims the role spiritual authority for itself. King Henry did not simply break from Rome, but also established a new church of which he himself was to be the head. Thus we see an exact reproduction of Luciferianism followed by Satanism, representing one complete stage of the regression.

However, we must continue, because, as we said, the regression must continue downward until it hits the bottom caste.

With the priests disenfranchised, it is only a matter of time before the royalty is consumed in the very blaze of rebellion that it ignited. This can be seen in the great revolutions of America and France, spawned in part by Enlightenment thinking, and secondly by economic concerns, which is to say, by the third level of the hierarchy, the *merchants*. During this period the validity of royal authority is called into question, and rightfully so, for without spiritual authority above it, it renders itself completely illegitimate. The merchants, inspired by the rebellion of the nobility, rebel against the nobility. After the dust settles, the roles of priesthood and the nobility become dispersed amongst the merchant class, and so the age of democracy begins, which tends to be but another name for *plutocracy*.

Remember that this third class, the merchants (*vaishyas*) possessed aptitudes belonging to the economic order. Thus, civilization in this era comes to be dominated by economic ideology, since that is the ruling mentality of the merchant caste. Every political question is formulated and answered in economic terms and society quickly comes to be ruled by those with the highest economic aptitudes. Those who are most economically oriented, which is to say, those who can make the most money for themselves or for society at large, become the new aristocracy and gain for themselves the esteem previously reserved for royalty and priesthood. Morality itself evolves to promote and esteem the virtues of moneymaking and economic success. Society's highest virtues at this point will be "productivity" and "hard work." Western civilization is currently within this stage of regression, moving slowly but surely to the last

and final stage of hierarchical disintegration, which has reared its head but has been thus far only partially successful.

Here we arrive at the necessary offspring of *capitalism*, which is the ideology of *socialism* or *communism*, as the case may be, through which the merchant caste is finally overthrown by the lowest and most animalistic elements of society. At this point, the only morality is embodied in the 'general will' of the proletariat (a classification that applies to all wage slaves, which is to say, almost the entire labor force of today, even in developed countries).

In short: the Middle Ages mark the last 'normal' stage of civilization to exist in the West. It fell at the Reformation when the spiritual authority became decadent and was (partly) overthrown. The royal authority, rendered illegitimate in its own turn and by its own actions, was then dismantled by the rising merchant class, leading to the age of industrial capitalism. Finally, because the laboring class sooner or later perceives the illegitimacy of the authority lorded over it by its moneyed masters, they too revolt. This completes the process, bringing civilization to a natural end, reducing centuries of social development back to the 'lowest common denominator'.

The spiritual barbarian.

We will have occasion to refer to certain aspects of modern civilization as *barbaric*. To call a people 'barbaric' is, in one sense, to describe the state of their soul, condemning their mentality or philosophy as godless. It may have nothing at all to do with superficial material conditions. A rich man can be a barbarian as easily as anyone else.

The Japanese traditionalists expressed just this when they made their anti-Western slogan: *sonnō jōi* or "revere the emperor, expel the barbarians." By 'barbarians' they of course referred to the Western powers, with their extravagant wealth, vulgar manners, secular governments, and materialistic attitudes. In this slogan they identified both the problem and the solution, for they not only sought a rejection of barbarian ideals, but also a return to proper spiritual hierarchy, headed by a divine emperor. However, once the flood gates were rammed open by American battleships in 1853, the modernization of Japan began, and a new slogan was created: *fukoku kyōhei* or "enrich the country, strengthen the military." The depth of the transformation is evident. Reverence for spiritual authority is dropped in favor of "enrichment," while the growth of a

"military" is adopted in place of a traditional warrior class, since at this same time the samurai of old were discarded.

This *barbarism* has also been condemned in a different context and by another term, *infidel*, which means precisely the same thing: it refers to a godless people who lack awareness of the divine, and who live their lives in ignorance of the truth.

In response, we Americans call our accusers 'religious extremists', and in part this is true, but to be completely honest, anyone who does anything in the name of God appears to the West as a 'religious extremist'. To be religious today is to be an extremist. That is why we also use the same term against Christians who, on the basis of traditional religious belief, reject abortion and homosexuality.

We could say without risk of exaggeration that 'religious extremist' today refers to anyone who is *not* a spiritual barbarian.

The banality of the end.

Authentic teachings about the end of the world should not be confused with those ridiculous 'doomsday' sermons of modern times involving mass destruction, fire, brimstone, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. These are nothing more than reflections of secular anxieties, and they have only begun to become religious opinions as true doctrine has begun to wane.

Conditions that characterize the end times are not sudden or abrupt shocks which overturn an otherwise peaceful existence, as if things could have gone on quite well had the higher powers not intervened to rain down chaos and destruction. On the contrary, traditional religions agree that those characteristics of the 'last days' are not novel but simply continuations of trends which we can already see. The end is nothing but the culmination of things that are already happening. It will come about perfectly naturally, as well as supernaturally. This does not mean that it will not be horrifying, but do we not witness horrifying things every day?

We must remember that the intervention of the divine acts primarily as a *redemptive* and not a *destructive* force. Thus, things will come to an inevitable finality through a cataclysm that certainly began long ago. Chaos will not be introduced which is not already in the works.

The evils of the last age will be evils of banality, passivity, and cowardice. That period may indeed be an epoch entirely free of physical pain, and because physical pain is a natural necessity and a created good, we can rest assured that in its absence a more sinister type of suffering will creep into man's existence, one that was held at bay only so long as man possessed ways of coping with his mortality. Therefore, the end may be an age of anesthesia and 'deadness' to feeling, but it will be no less agonizing for that fact. The most painful tortures are not primarily physical. If we analyze the trends now underway, following them to their logical conclusion, we can see that this is quite clearly the direction we are moving. It is already apparent that what is pleasure for some is pain for others, what is noble for some is villainous for others. At some point, as this inversion is universalized, it may be that at the time of man's greatest suffering, he believes that he is in perfect health, and at the time of his greatest poverty, he is unprecedentedly wealthy. So it is said:

> "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot. I would thou wert cold, or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest: I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing: and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."[6]

Scientific causality and the life of cultures.

Each culture can be viewed as a living organism grown up in a specific environment and constituted in a peculiar way with its own attributes and powers. However diverse this culture-organism might be in terms of its members, it has its own soul shared by all.[7]

By adopting the view of cultures as pseudo-organic beings of their own order—not in the same order as individual beings, but of the supra-individual order—we are liberated from the materialistic view of history which traces all happenings to the most inferior of causes. This is because each organism is a kind of being, and as the ancients tell us, every being has a soul even if not all souls have intellect. Since each culture has a soul, it has a lifespan that includes gestation, birth, growth, maturity, decadence, death. And like the living being,

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[6] Revelation 3:15-17.

[7] Here we will be speaking metaphorically about culture-souls, and do not intend this to be taken as a point of doctrine.

after death its most external parts either return to the earth or are appropriated by whatever living beings take up where it left off—but these things are no longer part of the dead culture. Lastly, a culture-soul, once dead, is gone and cannot come again. Any view of history should take into account these basic realities.

Scientific thinking, or thought based on the principle of material causality,[8] comprehends extension but not direction. It does not understand ends. It must deny purpose or what is called *teleology*. This is why we say that science cannot comprehend life, since each living being possesses an end toward which it is oriented and in which it is to find its fulfillment. Causality says that the tree can only be understood in terms of the seed. Teleology says that the tree can only be understood in terms of the fully developed Oak in all its glory.

Causality understands extension; teleology understands direction. Both are necessary, in balance. Causality deals with abstract, therefore timeless, space. Only teleology can deal with the progression of time. Causality deals with dead matter, which possesses extension but no direction—that is why it loves to experiment on dead matter and dwell on the results, which are repeatable and controlled and easily classified. But what can it do with life, where each being is different and unrepeatable, where 'experimental constants' are in short supply, where time intrudes always and changes everything from instant to instant and thereby shatters the illusion of control? This is why causality, applied to life, becomes a millstone for the mind. Because life can only be understood within the context of time, where it unfolds and comes to fruition.

Time is change, and the whole cosmos is subject to it. This change never ceases. That is why, even if science with all its controls could duplicate a particular being based on DNA and subject it to conditions externally identical to the original, the clone would be unique and something quite different, because it was born at another point in time and, for that reason alone, subject to temporal

[8] Again, for clarification, we should say that here we mean causality in the limited materialist sense. These limits would not apply in the context of a more comprehensive causality framework such as that of Aristotle or Aquinas, where we are presented not only with a material cause, but also an efficient, formal, and final cause. The latter categories are in fact what we have in mind when we contrast physical causality with *purpose* and therefore *teleology*.

conditions qualitatively different from those to which the original being was subject. Life can never repeat itself.

Every living organism follows a line of development according to its inner possibilities, possibilities to be actualized within a certain external framework, and these possibilities belong to it alone and will never appear again on the face of the earth.

We can comprehend history because history is itself a record of fulfilled destinies: of culture-souls, of individual beings, of art-forms, of religions, of ideas. If one attempts to understand history in terms of causality-thinking, one only comes up with a history of facts which are meaningless. Only through an understanding that transcends physical causes can we look at the stream of incidents and 'facts' and comprehend the organism—the soul—which is expressing itself through those facts, sometimes in cooperation with them and sometimes in direct opposition to them. History has a way of defying incidental pressures. Or to say it another way, life has the power to defy causality.

The type of thinking that sees everything as incident, and eventually concludes that life itself is the product of 'chance or accident' is obviously the result of a mentality that is locked in the confines of causality. This mentality will naturally lack any historical sense, and will never understand the soul that is the determining factor in all of history, but will instead only see a mass of accidents which could have been any other way and in which there is no significance whatsoever.

It could be said that the attempt to see behind incident and into the soul of cultures in order to interpret history is to delve into the subjective. This is true, but even the 'objective' presentation of history is highly subjective, for the 'facts' once collected must be selected, prioritized, organized, and ordered. Much, in fact, must be excluded altogether. Thus, histories written in such ways wind up being just another type of subjective creation. Even a book of nothing but dates undergoes a process of selection.

When 'scientists' set out to write history in an objective way, tracing its developments with impartiality, they inevitably run into situations where 'the evidence' they have is too scant or too overwhelming, and at these points they must depart from their objectivity and either emphasize what they *prefer* or else, when

evidence is lacking, use the poetic imagination or their intuition to fill in the gaps.

We can see this process displayed in absurd fashion when it comes to the 'scientific evidence' for the theory of evolution, which scientists have been in such a mad fever to 'prove' for some time now. So passionately and subjectively do they pursue this theory that almost every bit of 'evidence' they present is the production of an artist or else is explained by some childish narrative that is obviously a product of fantasy—and a superficial imagination at that. What the evolutionary scientists do with their craft, so do scientific historians. The only difference, in comparison to historians like Spengler, is that the scientists deny the operation of their intuition, and so it operates without their control or conscious engagement, and so haphazardly and without moderation.

There is no 'historical calculus', no technical method able to determine the importance and right ordering of historical events. Only the 'historical sense' can intervene, and a proper understanding of history is dependent on whether or not the historian possesses this sense. It is not a technique, and there is nothing 'impartial' about it.

Dissolution and inversion.

We can say with finality, then, that there is no such thing as Progress. The proper perspective, which we maintain throughout this work, is the opposite of evolution, and can therefore be called *involution*.

As involution proceeds, and we move further into the "Dark Age" of dissolution, we can expect to see increasing physical decay in the world, such as in the human genome and in the environment itself (shorter lifespans, extinction of animal species, etc.).

Alongside the increasing physical disorder we will also see increasing spiritual disorder. The further man moves from the pole of Paradise, the more obscured man's original spiritual virility will become. He will be increasingly "deadened" to the truth, and therefore the church will be increasingly reduced to a "remnant."

The belief in Progress represents an *inversion of the truth*, causing man to look backwards into time with disgust, and forward towards the cataclysm with a blind nostalgia. Such an inverted perspective

results in condescension toward the ancient past and delusional optimism about the future.

Dissolution and the inversion of proper relationships are two defining characteristics of the Dark Age. The complete replacement of the "long defeat" with its exact opposite, "Progress," is just one example of this inversion. Other examples will abound for anyone who chooses to look for them.[9] All such attempts to reorder or invert the truth are, by definition, Satanic:

> 'Luciferianism' is the refusal to recognize a superior authority whereas 'Satanism' is the reversal of normal relationships and of the hierarchical order, the latter being often a consequence of the former, just as after his fall Lucifer became Satan.[10]

[9] Consider also the modern reversal of the hierarchical relationship between church and state. Political authority, which is to say temporal power, is subject to spiritual principles and therefore in some sense must remain subordinate to the spiritual authority. This is why the state was traditionally situated beneath the church as far as the overall organization of society was concerned. Modern society, on the other hand, has completely subordinated the church to the secular state, allowing the profane to rule over the sacred, with the inevitable result being that nothing at all in society remains sacred.

[10] Rene Guenon, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*.

THE MODERN WORLD

AMERICA

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General remarks.

One should proceed with caution when criticizing one's own country. After all, gratitude is in order, and there is nothing so blinding to one's discernment as an *inability to be grateful*. It is no exaggeration to say that we owe everything to the society in which we were born and that made us who we are, for better or worse. It is unhealthy to despise one's own cultural heritage. Even if we judge it to be flawed, it is nonetheless our *birthright*, and it is the only one we will ever receive.

It seems to us that the impulse to condemn one's own country, which is not uncommon in America, is not only an expression of pride, an attempt at *virtue signaling*, but also a covert refusal to accept a natural responsibility—the responsibility that comes with being born into a community, with all of the obligations this implies. To be born into a community is to *already be guilty of whatever that community has done and is doing*. This is, no doubt, a hard saying, but it means that there is no separating oneself and saying 'I am not one of them'. That would only be a façade. The only real choice, if we find our culture detestable, is to take up our mantle, a mantle which at any rate cannot be discarded, and to make the best of it. Even if the ship is sinking and nothing we can do will save it, the only noble attitude is that of *amor fati*.

In less dramatic terms, we need only say that no country is without its demons, and the function of the *teacher*—a function we humbly assume throughout this manual—is to show people things they would not otherwise see, with or without their approval, and with or without concern for flattery.

We are not 'picking on America'. It just happens to be the nation with which we are the most familiar. What other country would we take as our point of departure? Should we speak instead of other societies that we've not personally visited and of peoples we do not understand, and who do not even speak our own language? We begin with what we know, with the world that we know, with the *human type* that we know.

This does not necessarily mean that we must play the antagonist to those of a patriotic bent. The problem, however, is that we are proponents of the traditional anthropology, in which man is viewed as fallen, in himself and in all of his projects, and in that respect, his best laid plans are doomed to imperfection, disease, and eventual decomposition. On this basis, we insist that nations too are projects of men and suffer the same fate. It seems this is enough to put us at odds with most of our countrymen.

Lastly, it is no secret that many Americans rank their country as the 'world leader' when it comes to the pursuit of certain ideals. *Liberty, Democracy, Equality,* etc. If we provisionally grant this 'leadership', we are all the more justified in using our own nation as a starting point for our discussion of the modern world, a world that is characterized by its obsession with precisely these ideals.

We intend to scrutinize our nation in the same way that we scrutinize the rest of the world and everyone in it. There is no malice in our critique, but there is also no concern for pandering, and this will seem strange to some who are accustomed to the endless stream of poisonous flattery that is churned out by popular media networks. We consider ourselves patriots, believe it or not, and there is nothing patriotic about watching in silence while your countrymen swallow spiritual poison.

The extremes of reformers.

Most reformers run to one of two extremes: either they operate on ideals lacking any real connection with the realities of life, which is typical of the academic type; or else they embrace a crude utilitarianism along the lines of John Stuart Mill. The founders of the United States of America seem to have achieved a combination of the two, not in the sense that they found a happy medium, but in the sense that their work seems to display the worst characteristics of both tendencies. However, in the end, the tendency toward *idealism* has prevailed.

The United States is a nation of *ideals*, where everyone is an idealist and where no one bases any of their policies or principles on the world as it actually is. This is, I think, because the world as it is, and man as he is, is unpleasant most of the time. Only in the more courageous periods of human history could philosophy and reality come into close contact. We are far past that now, in the age of ideals, the age of the fearful fleeing of reality. Spengler was right:

ideals are cowardice. And the degree to which a culture lives on ideals is the degree to which it has lost its cultural bravery.

The ideal of happiness.

The great philosophical traditions know nothing of the 'pursuit of happiness' in the modern sense. They spoke rather of 'the good life' which is to say, the pursuit of virtue and truth. These two ends are as different as night and day.

In fact, we might go further and say that they might even have warned us away from the 'pursuit of happiness' as a dangerous thing. Nietzsche was correct when he asked, "What does happiness matter to us?"[1] And observed that "the superior man is distinguished from the inferior by his intrepidity, by his defiance of unhappiness."[2] He concluded that "it is a sign of regression when pleasure begins to be considered as the highest principle."[3] And who can argue that the contemporary notion of happiness does not boil down to an obsession with pleasure in its various forms?

Yes, it can be argued that the ancients did speak of happiness, but their meaning does not factor into the modern one. In the modern sense, happiness is not being what one ought to be, surpassing oneself, transcending oneself, but rather it is a possession of one's desires, an affirmation that one is *already* good and the removal of any reminders of our imperfection. Modern happiness is the possession of what one wants to have, and the permission to do whatever one wills. It is a base happiness, shared even by lower forms of life, for a wild animal gnawing at its kill is *happy* in the way people today mean it.

This vulgar happiness is possible even under perverse and evil conditions. It comes to be a thing granted by authority or product purchased in a store, a creation of the market, a materialistic and individualistic pursuit. It is a *feeling*. Now there is nothing wrong with pleasant feelings, but as a social goal, we could say that, if we are going to pursue a feeling, it should be *mutual affection*. This, on a wide scale, would be a much more worthy pursuit than individual happiness.

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[1] *Will to Power,* 781.
[2] *Will to Power*, 222.
[3] *Will to Power,* 792.

Political messianism.

One of the dangers of political idealism is that it leads people to believe that the fundamental problem of evil is itself situated in the political order, as if the answer to human sin is to be found in the pages of the Bill of Rights or the Constitution. Here we can speak of a *political messianism*.

Political messianism is so universal today that it is difficult to describe the concept without sounding like we are describing a 'commonsense reality' that could not be any other way. How many American 'voters' see their form of democracy as the solution to many fundamental human problems? How many believe, in sentiment if not in word, that if the correct political framework were established, human suffering, man's companion from time immemorial, would for the most part be resolved?

Political messianism treats political structures as if they could and should accomplish the work of the Savior of Mankind. It is no coincidence, in this light, that political messianism grew up in the early 19th century when religion as a social force was falling out of favor and the secular state was born.

The disciples of political salvation typically devolve into two camps, depending on whether their psychology tends toward a *universalist* or a *particularist* view. Americans and Europeans tend toward the particularist view, and therefore toward liberal democracy. Those of a universalist bent tend toward totalitarian socialism. For both groups, the system and its ideals come to fill the void left after religion has been carved out of the social body and discarded.

As a further clarification, we can also say that for Europe and the United States, the system is identical with 'the nation', hence the presence of *nationalism* and, in its most extreme form, the delusion known as *American exceptionalism*.

Modernity is a twofold gift.

The trouble with a gift is that it cannot be un-given, it must simply be dealt with**.** Modernity can be considered a gift, but in the old sense, in which a gift is both a blessing and a poison, both a help and a burden. We should take care to understand both the benefit and the cost, and not to take the easy way out by focusing solely on one side of the balance. We find that in many cases the conditions of our world bestow on us great rewards for our successes, and at the same

time inflict punishments for our excesses. We credit this world with the rewards, but we forget that it is of its very nature to rebuke us.

The Declaration of Independence begs the most important questions.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident…" But the truths in question are not self-evident, at least not to anyone prior to the Enlightenment, and not to many thinking men afterward.

Since the Founders considered their notions 'self-evident', they did not feel compelled to demonstrate them with any clarity. Hence, we cannot even affirm that they are 'truths' since we cannot be entirely sure what ideas are in question, other than a series of vague abstractions. We encounter terms like *right*, *inalienable*, and *equality,* whose meaning it is impossible to determine, and which are inevitably defined differently in the mind of every person who ponders them, and always to his own advantage.

One could argue, in Thomas Jefferson's favor, that he had a sound defense of these principles in mind but did not have the room to write it in a document such as the Declaration, which was not a philosophical treatise. So be it. But where, then, in the writings of Jefferson or in any other founding father, can we find an adequate defense? We find that in virtually every case, these self-evident truths are not so much conclusions but are in fact the *starting point*.

Whether the founders arrived at them through carefully reasoned argument, or whether they were simply repeating John Locke, we cannot know, since they are not at pains to cite their sources.

The ideological founding of the American Republic was a grand instance of begging the question. A fallacy, in other words. One that has found almost global success.

Uselessness of abstract constitutions.

The importance of written documents is often overemphasized, and they are given priority of place as *causes* when they are more often *effects*. In other words, the literary or legal production is evidence of the presence of certain principles or beliefs, but does not create, instill, or guarantee them. They can edify, they can celebrate, those principles, but they cannot guarantee them. Only the life of the culture itself can maintain what the constitution proposes. We can

say, as a rule, that constitutions are useful so long as they are superfluous.

This leads us to the problematic idea of constitutions as universally valid. For if the document is only the 'witness' of a living entity and not the entity itself, then it is obviously not possible for any constitution to be a witness, in the abstract, for any and all nations. Its structure and content must be specific to the political life that it proclaims and describes. There is no constitution for all and that can be 'carbon copied' for disparate peoples with the expectation that it will have the same results for everyone. This is what de Maistre warned against:

> "A constitution that is made for all nations is made for none: it is a pure abstraction, an academic exercise of the mind, according to some hypothetical ideal, that should be addressed to man, in whatever imaginary realm he inhabits.
>
> "The constitution of 1795, like its predecessors, has been drawn up for Man. Now, there is no such thing in the world as Man. In the course of my life, I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, etc.; I am even aware, thanks to Montesquieu, that one can be a Persian. But, as for Man, I declare that I have never met him in my life. If he exists, I certainly have no knowledge of him."[4]

Idolatry of self in secular states.

Westerners have been called infidels, and not always without good reason, since infidel refers to one who has abandoned God, and European nations since the Enlightenment have more or less explicitly excluded religion from public life. However, in the place of religion there has grown up a new kind of cult revolving around a variety of divinized nationalisms. These secularized nations attempted to set aside religious sentiments but since this is impossible, they simply replaced God with 'country' and piety with 'patriotism'.

The original sin of the modern nation state is therefore the idolatry of itself in the form of its political ideals: it is not so much that we are infidels, at least not in sentiment, since we feel and act upon the same religious impulses as any other religious radical. It is rather

[4] Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations on France*.

that we have unconsciously chosen to redirect our religious fervor to political objects, namely the country, and usually it is the country *as an idea* and not so much *as a reality*.

The United States is perhaps the most extreme case of this self-idolatry. It has primacy of place as the first nation to found itself entirely without reference to a particular religious tradition—to envision and proclaim the political as truly *autonomous*. The result was that the political became an object of religious worship surrounded by religious language and ritual. This also tends toward an obnoxious exaggeration of the nobility of its institutions, hence the American insistence that their country is the 'greatest country in the world', in spite of the fact that those who claim this know nothing whatsoever about any other country but their own. Who could not see in such a claim an identification of country with God, since it would make perfect sense to say such a thing about one's god? God must always be *the* one and *the* true, and it is only logical to expect that everyone else in the world should also worship this god, and to be baffled when others do not see in this god the loftiness of his glory. This is precisely the nature of the confusion shown by patriotic Americans when someone else in the world does not admit the greatness and superior nobility of their country. They simply cannot understand it, because they cannot understand.

Again, we say that this impulse is *in itself* perfectly natural provided it is actually aimed at religious objects. But this kind of zeal, when transposed onto the political order, becomes an absurd and dangerous thing. If one accepts that America's underlying problem is an idolatry of itself, then all of its other problems become easier to grasp, and their 'pantheon' comes into view as a theology of political ideas like *liberty, equality, democracy*, and *the pursuit of happiness*. And since these are simply vague aspirations without content, and which are even, in some cases, mutually exclusive, their pursuit is impossible to realize, nor do they deserve the admiration that their patriotic adherents expect. The result is frustration, conflict, condescension, and an insufferable attitude of superiority.

National security by any means necessary.

Napoleon once said: "He who saves his country does not violate any law." In other words, if 'national security' is on the line, there is no such thing as a moral law, or at least there is no such thing as a moral law that is not subordinate to the safety of the nation. Survival by any means necessary is the order of the day. The problem is that it

only concerns itself with survival in a vague sense, and usually a materialistic one. It denies the possibility that certain actions can kill the soul even while saving the body. Christ said that if the flesh causes you to sin, you should cut it off and discard it, because the soul is what matters most. In other words, sometimes the flesh must perish so that the soul may live. One can naturally suppose that sometimes the political unit must dissolve so that the spiritual integrity of the people can remain intact. The attitude of modern patriotic nationalists is the reverse: if it is a choice between state and society, society must sacrifice itself for the state and its ideals. In a capitalist regime, where capitalists run the state and where there is little difference between the economic and the political order, this amounts to a situation where the people are asked to sacrifice themselves, physically and spiritually, for the *economy*, or for the economic well-being of the nation.

It is common for the media and the state to stir up panic with this talk of 'survival' but again it is not always clear what is in question, and there is a serious difference between biological survival, economic survival, political survival, and cultural survival. While it might be understandable to react with extreme force against threat of *biological* destruction, it is not equally justifiable to react in the same way and to the same extreme when it is merely a question of the survival of a certain economic regime or policy. And yet, hearing people talk, the one is equivalent to the other, or at least the distinctions are not important.

As it was put by one of the characters in Frank Herbert's *Dune* novels, "What good is survival if you do not survive whole?" How can you sacrifice the most important parts of yourself in order to merely 'stay alive'? And what kind of life would that be?

Abstraction and social institutions.

We tend to talk about things like education, economy, military, and politics *in the abstract*, and as a result we try to judge their value in the abstract instead of evaluating things as we actually find them in reality. In other words, if we admit that education, as a general concept, is a good thing, then we tend to attribute this goodness to the educational system as it presents itself to our experience. If education is worth funding, then *it must follow* that whatever passes for education in this time and place must be worth funding. But the value of an institution is not derived from the abstract idea we have about it. The institution is not identical with the idea. The

educational system itself might be an inhuman travesty, regardless of how good 'education' might be as an abstract pursuit.

Institutions are products of a given social order. Look not only to the fruits of an institution, but to the underlying social order first, and then you can know ahead of time the value of that institution. Since our social order is based on numerous errors about human nature, for example, and is geared toward ends that are explicitly anti-spiritual, then we can know that our institutions, regardless of the ideals by which they were inspired, will manifest those errors. Economy, education, politics, the ends of foreign policy and military action: we can say that all of these are 'goods' in the abstract and necessary in principle for any social order. We can say that, in the abstract, they all support human flourishing. But within the context of a sick culture or a perverse social order, they cannot avoid being perverted in turn, and instead of facilitating healthy human development, they destroy it. This is why, when someone offers a policy in favor of education, or freedom, or national defense, do not allow yourself to be enlisted in support of that policy merely because it appeals to a legitimate principle.

The truth about individual rights.

Individual rights are a figment of the humanist imagination. Since today everyone is a humanist—covert or overt—these supposed rights are taken for granted as if their reality could not be more obvious, despite the fact that there is never any real consensus on what they are, how many there are, and how they are to be discerned. One would assume that these were immortal and timeless truths, and it would come as a surprise to find out that they are actually quite young, being an invention of the Enlightenment. Before the Enlightenment, before the American Founders, there were not 'rights'—there was only 'right', and this notion of 'right' was fitted into a larger framework of justice. 'Right' is, in this sense, nothing other than the 'object of justice'. To put it as simply as possible, 'right' is the thing due to another in a relationship of justice.

Move from this to the notion of 'rights, and more specifically, 'individual rights'. In this phrase we can already see that the problem is one of *abstraction from social context* followed by an *indefinite multiplication*.

We said, *abstraction from social context*. The modifier 'individual' has the effect of exorcising 'right' from its relational framework and atomizing it. If a 'right' is a thing due to another in justice, then 'rights' only exist in the context of relationships. Thus, rights are communal, not individual. No one walks around "possessing" rights as a collection of powers he gets to exercise at will. Rights are not something that I get to exercise according to my tastes and whenever I feel like it and in whatever way I choose. Justice is the overarching framework that brings a "right" into existence, and there is always a context. When a man gives a baker some money, the bread is the right of the buyer, since it is owed him in justice. But it is up to the baker to fulfill it and only within that context and in that instance. To abstract a set of "rights" out of the framework of justice ends by denying the primacy of justice as the measure of how rights should operate, and winds up making justice subordinate to abstract rights. And this is precisely the situation we have today. Justice service rights and operates. And that is the definition of liberalism: the political system that absolutizes rights and sees its role, and therefore the role of the entire justice system, not as seekers of goodness and justice, but as protectors of abstract (and individual) rights.

We also mentioned *indefinite multiplication*, and this follows naturally from their *abstraction*. Social context and subordination to justice were the limiting factors of *right*, and without these limiting factors the meaning of the right becomes subjective, highly theoretical, and is susceptible to endless variations and interpretations. Hence the problem of new 'rights' constantly being claimed, infringed, or denied, whatever the case may be.

The meaning of the frontier and the absence of diplomacy.

For the immigrants who populated the narrow strip of seaboard during the Colonial Period of American history, the concept of the 'frontier' took on a meaning opposite of what it meant in Europe. In Europe, the term 'frontier' would simply have meant the border between one's own power group and some outside power. It implied the presence of 'the other' and one's own separation from this other. It therefore implied *relations* between two or more peoples and the on-going balance of power that is involved. In other words, for Europe, the term *frontier* would have implied *diplomacy*.

In America, this has never been the case. For the colonies, the frontier was a vast and unknown territory populated by 'savages' or by no one, something that was 'free for the taking' and yet deadly. It was a *wilderness*, and in order to incorporate that area and 'civilize' it, the primary enemy was Nature, with which one does not negotiate. The native peoples, in this context, were viewed more as an impersonal manifestation of hostile nature than as a political or cultural entity to be approached with tact and mutual respect. Young America, therefore, could avoid completely the problems of *sociability* and *political tact* that come with being surrounded by neighbors who wield power that is equal to or exceeds one's own.

This situation very naturally created a kind of ego-centeredness and lack of proportion in the American mindset from its earliest age. It is this experience that taught America to see any kind of cooperation as an affront to its 'liberty', just as an only child, accustomed to acting in complete freedom and without the need for compromise, perceives the mere existence of a new sibling as an affront to justice and as a kind of attack on its prerogatives. These conditions stunted the development of American diplomacy from the very start, and it has never recovered.

In this unfortunate context another problem festered. The isolation of the Colonies from comparable powers, and the freedom to expand and dispossess the native people with impunity, created a view of alien races and cultures as *objectively inferior*. For Americans, it is never a question of mere economic or technical superiority—it is always a question of *absolute superiority*. America is the greatest country on earth, not in a particular area of development, but *without qualification*. Again, America has never overcome this view. Say what it will about equality and human dignity as universal principles, these have never really been granted to people who look or live in ways alien to white Protestant culture. This is why the institution of American slavery, in comparison to slavery in other places and during other historical periods, was the most barbaric ever practiced. Even the abolition of slavery, of which Americans are so self-congratulatory, occurred after, not before, the abolition of slavery in Europe.

A certain kind of anarchy.

We find in the pre-revolutionary period a culture of 'take what you can and do what you will' that not only lacked attention to diplomacy but did not even have any real sense of political limits. When limits

were encountered, the limiting factor was perceived as an oppression. When the limiting factor was the crown, its political authority was called into question and eventually it was cast out.

A second limit was the indigenous population itself. When the Native American people could not be cast out, like the crown, they were killed or herded like cattle into concentrated areas that held no value for the newly formed nation.

Returning to the analogy of the only child, we say that America, from its birth, would not suffer externally imposed limits of any kind and was at the same time unwilling to impose any limits on itself, stooping even to genocide when it came to the indigenous people.

The genesis of imperialism.

If it be asked when American imperialism was born, we can answer that it grew up naturally with the settling of the territories themselves. The State imperialism we know today is only the later expression of the *individual imperialism* of the early settlers who, as legend has it, fought back the savages and took what land they could. The underlying mentality was that 'might makes right', a domestic free-for-all.

Every man who had the gumption could conquer a territory and proclaim himself its master. This, again, was not always organized or overseen by a political authority but was based on individual will and determination. Not only does this set the stage for an inevitably imperialist mindset, but it ensures the formation of an individualist culture where no power is conceivable beyond the will of the isolated person. It is no wonder that the concept of *community* is mostly absent from this context where the obligations and ties it implies would be seen as oppressive. The 'individualistic community' of the settlers was something more like a temporary pact of mutual benefit between free actors whose bond is not so much a kinship as it is an informal business agreement, a pact between otherwise separate political entities for the sake of mutual defense and enrichment, as in a time of war.

Idealism is an expression of senility.

Contrary to what we might assume, ideals on the broad social level are not a sign of youth but of old age. Societies become idealistic when their spiritual vitality—always more real than ideals—begins

to wane. During this stage of spiritual decline, they must find new and artificial values to pursue.

Unlike Europe, which became idealistic over time and due to a kind of cultural senility, America was born of ideals and was founded on them. America was born senile, an inhabitant of a dream world that cannot be, this world itself being only a product of an imagined history that never was. The Declaration of Independence, for example, tends to address itself to Man and not of the colonials. It is as abstract as it needs to be in order to give the impression of proclaiming universal and transcendent truths. This is the language of idealism and also of propaganda, which never deals in the concrete but always appeals to the imagination. When they spoke of the Rights of Man, it was again this universal Man who was in question, and not the Americans. This tactic repeats itself every time those in power wish to garner support from the masses, because it is very effective in veiling any hint of worldliness or self-interest.

It is not unreasonable to attribute this idealism to European senility, and to say that it was 'inherited' in such a way that early American culture is an example of lost innocence due to a poor spiritual education (or the absence thereof) at the start and thereby 'robbing it of its youth'. Remember that all of the original idealist-propagandists, from Jefferson to John Hancock, were formed by thinkers in France and England and there is not an idea in their writings and speeches that we cannot find in Locke, Rousseau, or Mill. And so, again, what is significant here is that while this idealism was, for Europeans, something they entered into with the support of a pre-existing culture, the Americans built their culture on this idealism. In other words, England departed into unrealism but was saved by the fact that it carried the culture, art, institutions, religious sentiments, and habits of its youth with it into old age, and so there was a natural balance. The Americans, on the other hands, went directly to the stage of unrealism and for them it is not so much a final resting place as it is the foundation of everything else.

Those who initiate modern wars do not fight them.

We have referred to the Founding Fathers as propagandists. This is not altogether fair, we admit, but it is adequate with respect to the part they played in the Revolutionary War. They provided the propaganda for the war, but, aside from the few exceptions which prove the rule, they did not fight in it.

Of the fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence, none died from injuries inflicted by the British. *None*. In fact, the only signer who died from a gunshot wound during the war received the wound from a fellow officer in a duel.

The actual soldiers who did the fighting were, just like they are today, from the poorer classes who wanted something better for themselves and whose hearts are readily inflamed by lofty ideals. This phenomenon, which is the inverse of traditional warfare, has become one of the hallmarks of the modern world and the wars waged by its 'popular' governments.

The modern upper class is shielded in every way: legally and economically, because they make the laws or else fund those who make them; and also psychologically, being somewhat immune to the same propaganda that recruits the poor, because they have too much to lose and little to gain by dying on the battlefield. The wealthy class provides not so much the leadership as the technology for the war. It provides *the means of war* but the manpower is drawn from everywhere else. We also said that they are immune to propaganda, first and foremost because they *are the propagandists*, but also because the materialism of the wealthy makes them deaf to moral and religious appeals, appeals that mean *everything* to the common man. That is to say, the wealthy have too much to lose when it comes to actual bloodshed and so you will not find them anywhere near it. At most they attend meetings, legislate, issue draft papers, and publish newspapers.

Speaking of propaganda, we can say that the Revolutionary War was also, in a secondary sense, America's first Civil War. The tactics used against those who opposed the war, the 'loyalists', were an example of sheer anarchy, and many were expelled immediately afterward.

History tells the rest of the story. Victory in the Revolution resulted in a federal union, uniting the thirteen colonies in independence. The State, again, was federal and its powers and its relation to the various "states" was formulated in the Constitution, again written not by those who fought the war but by those who started it.

The individual-state opposition.

The rhetoric of the Founders fixates on a novel idea—that there exists a real opposition between 'the state' and 'the individual.' This opposition, being a theoretical abstraction, exists mostly in minds of

theorists but, thanks to a small group of such theorists who Founded a nation, it has become a philosophical presupposition for most modern people.

The popularity of the individual-state dichotomy explains why the various state-level constitutions within the union, as well as the many future constitutions modeled on the American one, not only take this opposition for granted but go so far as to emphasize it as *the central feature* of political life. The whole of political philosophy then boils down to the question of how to balance this relationship and, more importantly, the question of how the individual can be protected from the state, since the state is, in this framework, always odious to him. This fixation leads directly to the elaboration of so many 'rights' granted to the individual. These rights are typically rattled off in list form and often without any connection or common justification. The citizen claims these rights against all other political entities, and perhaps invents a few additional ones—why shouldn't he?—you can never have too many.

The primary antagonist, against which the rights were theoretically directed, was envisioned to be the encroaching state, but in the long run they are handy against anyone and anything that limits the 'exercise' of the ever-growing list of rights.

What is conspicuous about this emphasis on 'the state' in early American rhetoric is that, at the time, there was no domestic 'state' to oppose to the domestic 'individual'. There was the crown, but the crown does not correspond to what the state would become in the United States Constitution, and so this legislation was in a sense developed *ex nihilo* and aimed to regulate an imaginary future antagonist. In Europe there was similar legislation, but any such act was a *reform* of an existing legal tradition and if political power was revised, it was always a long-standing organic relationship that was under revision, rather than the *invention* of a legal apparatus designed *in anticipation* of a future relationship.

Individual rights were born in the minds of European philosophers and in the shadow of decadent political institutions that were themselves centuries old, but these rights came into their own in America. European reformers had in view actual political powers that matched the 'state' component, but they had to imagine the 'individual': the American intellectuals had the 'individual' but they had to imagine what it would be like to have a 'state'. These two different points of departure meant that the imagination had to play

a very different role in each situation, and the result is that the blind spots and excesses are very different in the American context than elsewhere.

The presence of anti-state ideology.

What created the American 'individual' as distinct from people embedded in the various European traditions? This was mostly a result of factors already discussed: the availability of a 'frontier' in the non-European sense, the mentality of 'take what you will', the absence of any prior political tradition, not to mention a fairly clean slate in terms of religious roots, since in Europe it was never possible to really leave behind the influence of Catholicism, while in the New World the Church had no pre-existing cultural infrastructure. America really was a mass of *individuals* who could and did proceed outward from a handful of settled areas to claim new lands on a regular basis without oversight or aid. Thus, while it may have been odd to speak of 'individual rights' in Europe, it seemed much less so in America.

As for political attitudes, we can say that an anti-state ideology was present from the start, not so much as a reaction to a corrupt state but rather as a fact of life. The Revolution, which was directed against the crown, and therefore against a state, was in fact a *result* of this anti-state ideology rather than being the explanation for it. Those who say that Americans distrust the state due to their experience with monarchy are putting the cart before the horse.

Americans have never been in a position to appreciate social authority as a good. The state, for European peoples, was (at one time at least) a force for order and prosperity, whatever the abuses of which it might have been guilty. The European states were, and therefore were experienced as, the organic culmination of a cultural lifecycle, and in this sense they 'belonged' and had their role to play. They were not perceived as intrinsically alien and oppressive, although capable of oppression. In America, the perception was different. Since the only apparent state was the distant British one—distant and for the most part unnecessary for the colonial *individual*—such an authority could only be experienced as a parasitic body of distant meddlers.

The Revolution was merely the occasion of the expression of what was already a reality. The Americans were a people destined to perceive any kind of state as an enemy to human flourishing.

America may have been right to think that it did not have need of the British government in order to prosper, but it was self-destructive to move from this idea to the idea that all government is necessarily oppressive. One bite of rotten fruit is not good reason to abstain from it for the rest of one's life, and to do so is to invite disease. Likewise, a healthy appreciation for government authority and the capacity to feel kinship with that authority is the sign of a thriving culture, and cultural disease is the consequence of a nation's inability to grow into a familial hierarchy.

Theory over practice.

The sacred documents of the American founding can be viewed in two aspects: *theoretical* and *practical*. We could also say *realistic* and *idealistic*.

They are quite intelligible and even intelligent when they go about putting theory into practice, moving from ideals to systems. The problem is that the *ideals* themselves are unintelligent, the *theory* unintelligible. But nonsense can seem intelligible if you've already taken it on faith as Gospel truth, for at that point no critical eye is necessary. It just needs to sound good or to appeal to one's prejudice. This is the nature of ideology. The ideas that compose an ideology are almost always incoherent when taken as a whole and analyzed, but in an immediate sense they are so simple that they seem to 'speak for themselves', or in the words of the Declaration, they are always 'self-evident', and so they provide convenient fodder for propagandists.

The basic error of the Enlightenment and its ideological children (rationalism, humanism, liberalism) is the preference for theory over and above the facts of concrete experience, and a tendency to try and 'impose' theory on a reality that does not pay homage to clever ideas. Man himself is one such 'fact of concrete experience' and half the time he does not even pay homage to his own lofty ideals. Idealists always end up being hypocrites, and an idealistic society cannot avoid betraying itself. Slavery is an interesting example. From the time of the Founders until Lincoln and the Civil War, the cant about all men being 'created equal' and 'endowed with rights' was accepted as commonsense and even held with sincere conviction *while at the very same time* the native population was herded around like cattle and accorded no dignity whatsoever, and the institution of black slavery for a long time did not warrant a second thought.

The United States and its treatment of blacks, Asians, Catholics, and native peoples throughout its history should serve as proof that *to adopt an ideal in theory can actually prevent it from being put into practice*. The idea of 'equality,' being written into the constitution but not actualized except for a particular group, very likely allowed that privileged group to carry on for generations in the face of barbaric inequality. High thinking blinds us to dark realities. This is because the ideal, accepted in theory, gives those who benefit from it the feeling that it actually exists, and so the job is done. Any objective observer can tell us that America, prophet of freedom and liberty, has not often been the first out of the gate when it comes to the actual implementation of its own gospel, and in some perverse way, this appears to be due to the very fact of its devotion, as if these convictions create their own blindspots. It works the same way in religion: those who make a grand show of worshipping the *ideals* of the Gospel often have a very confused and immature way of putting them into practice.

Various instances of unrealism.

The Founders, armed with their rationalistic humanism, availed themselves of so many 'self-evident' truths drawn from abstract thought and having little connection with reality as we live it. The very idea of equality is almost always evidence of a lack of respect for the facts of physical, mental, and spiritual inequality.

The neatly logical formula about governments being 'instituted' by groups of individuals and based on their 'consent', subject to dissolution if and when it stops serving their purposes, is not something that has ever existed anywhere in the past and cannot exist anywhere in the future. As with the United States itself, the document was conceived and authored by an elite. The proper formula would be the opposite: that governments are necessary and are justified due to the *natural inequality* of men, not so much to create liberties and 'secure rights' but to *civilize* people to the end of bettering themselves and each other via cooperative pursuit of *the good*.

Any pretenses at having discovered the one universally valid form of government are also delusional. The form of government of any people must be an organic expression of that culture's spiritual temperament, stage of development, geographical situation, and mode of living. Obviously this means that there is no 'ideal' structure

that can be thought up and imposed on all nations at all times without regard to any of these considerations.

There is no such thing as the 'will of the people'. Not literally, not metaphorically, not as a sociological generality. What we call the 'will of the people' is but the carefully manipulated consensus of a uniform population, kept in line by a steady stream of aggressive propaganda and patriotic feeling. The only time 'the people' wield an independent 'will' of any kind, is in the form of the unrest that arises when the leadership becomes incompetent and undermines itself. The will of the people surfaces only in chaos, when the lions finally devour the lion-tamer that became lazy or arrogant. Such was the case with the French Revolution. But under normal circumstances, the people do not exercise any kind of unified will whatsoever—they simply subscribe to one or more *platforms* designed by the few.

Governments are always the expression of the particular genius of a society. They are not founded on any theoretical 'principles'. Principles may be formulated, but they do not influence the practice of government. They merely provide a vocabulary for the public conversation about politics. That is why these principles are always, in themselves, empty of any objective content: freedom, dignity, rights, equality, self-government, etc. These are not concrete ideas but containers to be filled with various meanings depending on the person or group. But the containers could be changed without affecting the actual practice of government, which does not depend on these 'principles' in the least.

One of the most important keywords in American ideology is 'liberty'. We will devote a separate section to the topic of liberty specifically, but here we will only observe that liberty is more of a feeling than a fact and really isn't something that is 'practiced' in America more than anywhere else, and in fact we could point to ways in which it is practiced less in America than in other places or in the past. To use the example of conscription (which we call 'the draft'), we can say that they very idea that the state can take men and sons (and soon, daughters as well) from their homes without their consent and send them overseas to fight wars they do not understand against enemies they've never heard of—all this is the measure of American 'liberty' and evidence of its purely ideal character.

Lastly, we can mention the idea of the 'separation of powers' into the legislative, executive, and judicial—an idea that was borrowed from Montesquieu. As usual it is very clean and very logical in theory but convoluted and chaotic when it comes to human realities. Just as the theoretical opposition between 'individual' and 'state' does not correspond to reality (since the state is in fact composed of the same individuals it theoretically opposes), so also the 'powers' that the constitution seeks to separate can only be separated on paper. In reality they interpenetrate. Likewise, the real 'power' that should (but cannot be) separated from all of the others is the money power, which today has become the primary driver of American government. A single man or a small group of extremely wealthy men who, in theory, are opposed to the state, are in practice its engineers and managers. Money reaches into all branches of government, and one hand can pull many strings.

The delusion of universality.

We've already seen that America's budding ideology presupposed a certain geopolitical situation, one of isolation and of vast possibilities for expansion, creating a mentality of *individualism* and *individual imperialism* that had never before found such full expression. What this situation also created was that feeling of 'universality' that Americans have always maintained. America is like the child who spends most of its formative years shielded from any significant external threat and who is never exposed to any thought or habit that is not 'the way of tribe'. Such a child grows up assuming that *our way* is not simply a *good way* among other possible ways, but that it is the *only way*, and that *our tribe* is in exclusive possession of *the good*. In America we observe a kind of national provincialism that does not know how to handle other nations claiming that they too possess legitimate ways of life.

In other words, isolation encourages a narrowness of thought that thwarts the development of true diplomatic savvy. A nation ruled by this condescending mentality cannot really have any 'allies' but only 'subjects' and 'political instruments'. The very idea that America might encounter *peers* seems to have insulting implications of equality.

This is why Americans think that the principles on which their government was formed are the true principles of government and that if the world was interested in truth and goodness it would follow

America's example, and that the choice not to do this is a sign of either oppression or ignorance or obstinacy or evil intent.

It is much harder (although not impossible) for European nations to develop this mentality, nestled as they are between so many undeniable peers, each fluctuating in power and deserving of some level of respect. What would America look like if it had grown up with no other choice but to *cooperate* with, *compromise* with, and even *respect*, a technologically advanced native population? What if it had found itself situated between powerful nations to the north and south? We must assume that its social psychology would today be quite another thing.

The ideological paintbrush.

The extent to which America is a primarily ideological culture is shown by the fact that from the beginning every enemy is construed as an ideological enemy. America never fights an enemy simply because both America and the enemy are after some material resource or advantageous island or seaport. No, never—even though this is almost always what the conflicts are about. No—American must paint each and every antagonist as an enemy of its very ideological principles: the enemy isn't just after the same land that we are after, for the same worldly reasons that we are after it. No—they are after our freedom. They are against equality and human dignity. They are against God, and so on, and they therefore pose a threat, not just to our economic advantage, but to our very way of life!

From the Founding Fathers through Lincoln's framing of the Civil War as an attack on a nation 'conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal', America makes every conflict ideological, even when the enemy doesn't care the least bit about America's ideology. This habit reached its culmination during the two World Wars.

It is partly instinctive and is an outgrowth of the psychology we've been describing. But it is also practical and is a necessity for any *popular* government. Democracy needs the enthusiasm of the people behind its military experiments or else it would have no soldiers. The entire nation will always run to the defense of *liberty* and *justice* and *equality*. Men with families and much to lose would be less likely to leave home to fight and die when the heart of the

conflict is admitted to be nothing more than a trade dispute about corporate drilling rights in the Middle East.

One of the unintended but inevitable consequences of this *overuse of the ideological paintbrush* has been that any foreign power that, for any reason, happens to ally itself with the United States becomes automatically a 'pro-freedom' power. Sometimes this makes very little sense, and it approached absurdity during the World Wars, since it embraced allies like Bolshevik Russia, but it is no less astounding today when it encompasses 'allies' like Israel and Saudi Arabia.

As one would expect, there are times when these 'freedom allies' do not care to be claimed by America as ideological bedfellows, but we are incorrigible.

Universality and messianism.

While America became more convinced of the universality of its ideology, Europe began moving on from that very ideology to something else, and in the face of the outright rejection of that ideology by much of the rest of the world, America took the logical step of seeing itself as the sole possessor of the 'true ideology'. It was perhaps inevitable, then, that America would begin to see its destiny as savior of the world, with the Gospel of its Declaration of Independence.

It was said best by Francis Parker Yockey:

> "In the 20th century, when the Rationalistic type of ideology had been discarded by the advancing Western Civilization, the American universalizing of ideology turned into *messianism*—the idea that America must save the world. The vehicle of the salvation is to be a materialistic religion with "democracy" taking the place of God, "Constitution" the place of the Church, "principles of government" the place of religious dogmas, and the idea of economic freedom the place of God's Grace. The technic of salvation is to embrace the dollar, or failing that, to submit to American high-explosives and bayonets."

In this sense, American ideology is a religion, and the nation a mystical body, just as the Church always taught that its believers formed the mystical body of Christ. When the old Catholic

mysticism was left behind, it was not difficult for nationalistic mysticism to fill the void.

This is why patriotism in America is not considered a sentiment but is more like a *religious devotion*—a mandatory one. To be seen as a heretic, it is not even necessary to speak openly against America. A *sin of omission* is enough. The mere failure to express patriotic zeal according to the prescribed rituals and at the expected time is to deny something about the universe that is good and true. To fail to express one's patriotism is to do violence to 'the nation' to which we owe our existence.

For all its zeal, there is a weakness inherent in American idealism. Since it is not an organic production, it has no roots, and we find that it is easily put aside and then taken back up again. When 'real life' or material advantage gets in the way of one of its principles, the principle is quickly discarded. American ideology is the product of rationalism and as such its adherents will find little difficulty rationalizing any application of it, or absence of its application, and will be able to apply or ignore it at will.

We have compared American ideology to a religion, but we find that its adherents are not really *convinced*. They 'belong', but they do not really 'believe'. That is why its dogmas are so easily discarded, reinstated when convenient, and then discarded again, and why this hypocrisy seems to present little difficulty for the adherents. They love to say the words 'liberty' and 'equality' and to feel the sweet sentiment that accompanies the pronunciation of these words, but they are not rigorous as to their application. Or to put it another way, they do not 'belong' to the religion in a mental or moral way, but more as an instinctual and emotional membership, and this kind of membership does not insist on consistency.

While we're on the subject of American ideology, it should be said that ideas might have a formative impact on intellectuals, but on the people in general, driven as they are by non-rational processes, ideology is only taken on as a kind of clothing. By speaking the same vocabulary they can form movements and communicate, but the actual ideas and their content are always, for the masses, fluid and in the end disposable. The people operate on instinct and according to a certain character and temperament, and these are not touched by rhetoric and philosophy. This goes for every culture, and not just the Americans.

The origin of the party system and plutocracy.

For the elitists and intellectuals responsible for the American founding, there was no such thing as 'party politics' in the current sense. Parties were known and parties were despised as the source of factions. George Washington did not leave office before openly condemning 'the spirit of the party',[5] and Thomas Jefferson said that if he had to join a party in order to get into heaven, he'd settle for hell.[6] The preference was instead for a class-based government ruled by something like Jefferson's 'spiritual aristocracy' which in theory meant anyone but in practice would always mean members of a certain class. But America was populist in spirit, thanks to the propaganda of the Founders, through which they undermined their own designs, and its political mechanisms eventually took on a popular form, and this meant a *party system*.

We must insist that the structure and operation of the government were destined to lead to a party system. The primary political problem is the acquisition of power, and to keep that power once acquired. When an individual holds office only for a very short period of a few years, then it is clear to all that in order to really seize and hold power, groups must be formed. Although this could, in theory, involve the formation of a large variety of parties depending on beliefs or preferences, for reasons of escalation and efficiency, this process proceeds almost immediately to the reduction of all politics to a battle between two groups. This is because the only goal is to maintain power, and all that is not necessary to that task is discarded, leaving two groups on two sides of an arbitrarily drawn line, whose only consistent positions are that the people opposite them are wrong on all counts.

The party system is also necessitated by the technique of popular elections. Elections require electioneering to organize voters. The organization of voters according to a certain strategy or goal is the essence of the party function. Money is naturally the driving factor of parties and becomes the very fuel of political development since all effective party activities require money. Those who provide or control the most money have the most influence on the party. Thus, the very implementation of liberal democratic theory leads irrevocably to a plutocratic reality.

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[5] From Washington's *Farewell Address*.

[6] "If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all." *Letter to Francis Hopkinson*, 13 March 1789.

Ideals are organizational tools for the party; the funds, however, are the substance of the party. Without the funds there would be no party to promote its ideals.

Ideals are powerful motivators for votes, but they remain impotent with regard to actual political direction, since the essence of political activity is the maintenance of power via the influence of money. Ideals are what money looks like once it has been converted into a currency that everyone can share. Money is the God, but ideals are a kind of Eucharist that proceeds mystically from the money power. Money can really only be held by a few, but the ideals of the party can be consumed by all and can give all a sense of mystical participation in power.

Since the operation of democracy via the party system requires two things—money and ideals—and since money is scarce while ideals are plentiful—it is easy to see how money becomes more important and is almost always the determining factor in American elections, with rare exceptions.

Mixed motives and the Civil War.

The Civil War revolved around slavery in rhetoric and in fact, but we should be careful not to ignore every other factor, as if slavery were the only issue at stake. This problem of 'mixed motives' is in fact the norm for political phenomena, and it is hardly an original observation to say that various currents were at play, and that the war was more a 'point of convergence' than a single-issue line in the sand.

What was unique, in the case of the Civil War, was that the tactics used by the North, the organization of its motives, the legal prerogatives it claimed, and the propagandistic approach it deployed, would combine to lay the groundwork for all future US military endeavors, and would become a kind of 'blueprint for success'. Moreover, by taking a close look at the secondary aspects of the conflict, we can better understand how much we lose even when we win.

We can and should be grateful that the barbaric 'chattel slavery' of the South was destroyed, but we are also inclined to lament that, when the dust settled, certain desirable characteristics of Southern life were lost and could never be recovered. As a result, some of the most unattractive characteristics of Northern economic life would

become universal, partially due to the imperialistic nature of industrial economies, but also due to the destruction of any vigorous cultural obstacles to that style of production. All of this was intentional, because the Civil War represents the violent culmination of economic tensions that had been building for quite some time. Yes, many of the men who died, died for the freedom of the slaves, but as for the power groups that orchestrated the project, ulterior motives were almost certainly predominant. In their case we can say that it is always possible to do the right thing for the wrong reasons, and modern political projects tend to operate for the wrong reasons, even if occasionally the right thing is done.

To understand the economic aspect of the conflict, we should note that the richest men in America lived in the north and made their fortunes on manufacture and trade. This put them in a very different economic world from the Southern states, where a distributed, agrarian style of organization was the norm. In the North, wealth was held by capitalists in the industrial sense while in the South it was held by families who were *aristocratic* in the old sense of nobility and breeding. The North was therefore plutocratic in the commercial and political sense, while the South was patriarchal, the most obvious sign of which was the institution of slavery itself.

We should observe, with the Catholic writers G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc, that there are different degrees or types of slavery, and what constitutes slavery for us depends largely on the criteria we use to define it. If we understand slavery as the complete dependence (total lack of self-direction) of the individual on a superior, which takes place in a context where there are no real alternatives open to the individual except to remain faithful to the master or else live in the street and starve, then we can say that the industrial North and the agrarian South each had their own 'brand' of slavery. It would, of course, be disingenuous to conflate the two as if they were equally barbaric, but the point remains that by our given definition, it is a question of degrees, and that both fit the criteria. Thus, the war was not so much about the abolition of slavery but about which type of slave-based economy would win out.

As for the Southern agrarian type, we can observe that the slave owner had to provide shelter and enough food for his slaves to live, and it was his loss when slaves became sick and died, since they could not be easily replaced. This placed a certain natural minimum on what he had to provide. Turning to the Northern capitalist, this 'owner' did not have to provide either food or shelter, or even

consider these things, but only had to offer a wage. As to the nature of this wage, it was determined by 'competition' whereby the workers were set against one another, driving the cost of their labor to an absolute minimum that did not have any real relation to food, shelter, and family size or health. The amount of 'pay' therefore fluctuating, calculated in the abstract, and under the influence of numerous factors, most of them never acknowledged and still not acknowledged, which had nothing to do with the limits of the human condition. All human and natural considerations were thereby avoided by the capitalist, whereas in the South they were constantly confronting the plantation owner. *This does not, of course, mean that the Southern slave owner was more humanitarian.* It only means that, by necessity, his mind was directed to real human needs, whereas the capitalist was able to avoid these things and think only in terms of money.

The South was *organically* structured, which implies the presence of established *roots*, and this meant that it was less mobile, particularly in the sense that it did not have the fluid 'workforce' that the North had achieved via wage-slavery. This was yet another disadvantage, from a purely economic standpoint and during the war.

The South, being what it was, had to import manufactured items either from the North or from somewhere else. They chose to import from England, and this led the North to demand high protective tariffs. This was a primary political struggle in the decades preceding the Civil War.

What was at first an *economic* battle became a *political* one. This is how it always works. To cite a more recent example, we can mention Guatemala (the 'banana republic'), when it chose to act in its own interest, in opposition to the United States-based corporation, *United Fruit*. The Guatemalan government repossessed the lands held by the foreign corporation. Propagandists were hired and suddenly the issue became communism vs. 'freedom', since that sort of thing always enlists the masses, who would never go to war just to increase the profits for United Fruit but are always ready to glut themselves on ideological struggle.

In this same way, idealists from the North emphasized the slavery issue to the point that it completely obscured the economic battle. It remains obscured in the public mind to this day. The Yankees held the slavery issue high before the public, and of course held up their

own wage-slavery as the pinnacle of human self-direction and humanitarian progress against the inhuman cruelty of the plantation owner. A false dichotomy if there ever was one, but the chattel slavery of the South was so ugly that the wage slavery of the North looked dignified in comparison.

We must also address the issue of *secession*. Leading up to the Civil War, or what could just as easily have been called the Secession War, there was a struggle over representatives in the central government. The South had long been at an economic disadvantage, but this was now becoming real in the legislative sphere, and it was clear that the central government was becoming captive to the interests of the North. This is, again, a kind of illustration of the principle that democracy is driven by money—since the territory that holds the wealth will inevitably hold the government.

The issue that finally actualized the war was whether or not the Southern states had the right to secede from the union. The South, seeing that the union of which it was a part was no longer serving its interests, decided to withdraw. It should go without saying that free people who enter, as a collective group, into a given political union should be able, when they judge it necessary, to dissolve the contract. Was this not the premise of the Declaration of Independence? But the heart of the issue was not the maintenance of liberty, it was rather *the maintenance of power*, and the secession of the South would have seriously diminished the power wielded by the whole, and so came the war.

The Civil War represents the assertion of ownership by the North of the territory occupied by the Southern states, such that the claims of the Northern states could overrule those of the Southern states. Although it seems oddly contradictory, the *freedom* of the slaves was pursued with vigor while the *freedom* of Southern states to secede was vehemently denied.

The fluid nature of the Northern population was perhaps its greatest advantage once the war began, since all of its 'workforce', composed of so much homogenous 'human material', was easily converted into cannon fodder. Moreover, the Northern capitalists could pay their wage slaves to fight, and they did, although of course the white soldiers were paid twice as much as the blacks. In the South, the Confederate soldiers were sometimes offered official wages but in practice, and unofficially, they were paid nothing at all.

Another advantage of capitalist economies is that they can replace lost soldiers immediately and via the same tactics that they use as employers to replace lost wage-slaves. They can either hire more 'manpower' from the desperate working class, always ready at hand, or else bring in immigrants. In the case of the Civil War, they did both. The immigrants were mostly German and Irish, and this allowed them to keep fighting and win even while the South won battle after battle against superior numbers. When the dust settled, the Union had sacrificed over 150,000 more men than the South. It was a case of quantity over quality, a hallmark of modern warfare. It typically worked, but not always, as would be discovered much later in Vietnam.

What is important to note here is that the Civil War, and in particular the methods used to win it, set the tone for all later American military policy. From that point forward, recruitment would be based on virtue propaganda about the freedoms of this or that abused group, about attacks on American principles of freedom and equality, and the real issue, almost always a question of economic advantage, would not be mentioned. The soldiers would be paid a wage roughly equal to the subsistence wages they normally earned, sometimes higher, and recruited almost entirely from the lower ranks of society. As for the Confederacy, which, whatever its errors, embodied more traditional attitudes, we find that men of all ranks came with or without pay to the front. Never again would that be the norm.

The Civil War abolished chattel slavery, and we cannot but rejoice at that fact; but it came at a cost. It meant the death of the aristocratic spirit in American warfare and governance, and the bringing to fruition of rule and war by plutocracy.

The Civil War also signified the beginning of American isolation in the sense that even if England had a dog in the fight (since it had business with the South) it would not intervene because it did not have the surplus resources. Europe's concerns at that point were closer to home. Thus, America came into its own as *the* power in its part of the globe. The United States did not have to fear the interference of outsiders any longer.

Technique versus form.

Those who refuse to admit that America is a plutocracy are confusing the *technique* of government with its *form*. The technique

of American government has always been to appeal to the people, and in that sense America is *popular* and even *democratic*, but in terms of what actually gets done, what power drives what gets done, who drives it, and who it benefits, the United States government is undeniably plutocratic. It requires almost no effort to illustrate this. We need only point out that every four years, the people are invited to choose their favorite presidential candidate, but the choice is always between one millionaire and another millionaire. Thus, the technique involves 'the people' but their involvement does not affect the form, which revolves around the wealthy class.

To clarify, we can ask what defines a plutocracy. Is a plutocracy merely a situation where those who have the most money are the rulers? Of course not, because, as a rule, *those who rule always have the most money*. The real difference between a plutocracy and any other form of government is that *the money makes the ruler*. In other words, the rulers always have money, but do they have money because they are the rulers, or do they rule because they have money, *and by virtue of this fact alone*? If the former, you may have any number of arrangements from functionalism to aristocracy to monarchy to socialism. If the latter, you have a true plutocracy.

The argument that America is 'popular' does nothing to change this. Power in society is always popular in the sense that it is legitimized in some way by some generally respected social principle. Sometimes that principle is force itself. Sometimes it is religion. Sometimes it is class and nobility. The point is that this principle, whatever it is, is the real 'absolute' behind power, and it is this absolute that justifies the exercise of absolute power, which acts as its executor, and this executive power, insofar as it (supposedly) embodies the absolute, is answerable to nothing but itself.

Only in the case of theocracy is there a power beyond the power, an authority beyond the temporal government, one which even the government must answer to, but with all other power principles, the temporal power is absolute and not responsible to anyone who is not one of its representatives. Thus, a power based on nobility will not be answerable to anyone but the nobility for the exercise of this power. In America, the power principle may have begun in a kind of intellectual elitism, this 'spiritual aristocracy' making the rules and holding itself accountable, but these men were mortal and after a generation 'spiritual aristocracy' became an aristocracy of financiers, and today money is the sole power principle in America.

Again, it is important to understand that this is qualitatively different than the traditional situation in which the lords held the gold, but the gold did not make the lord. The barbarian warlords of old were sometimes wealthy, but they were wealthy because they were the most powerful warriors, and they were not the most powerful warriors simply because they were wealthy. Money was drawn to those in possession of a skill or virtue: in a plutocracy, power gravitates to money itself.

With American plutocracy money is at the top and those who rule, rule because they have money, and this is why we say that wealth in America is situated in a unique position by being answerable to no other power principle than itself. Wealth answers only to wealth, and wealth is absolute. Remember, however, that for this to happen, this principle—wealth—must be socially respected on a general level as absolute, as a kind of legitimate determinant of who should rule.

Finally, a remark on how America could become so thoroughly plutocratic, and in such a short amount of time. All other power principles except money require some kind of pre-existing tradition, and they justify themselves with reference to this tradition. For example, both aristocracy and monarchy are sustained by tradition, as is any priestly power, and so on. In America there was no tradition. When Americans try to think of tradition they think of the Constitution, which for them is the beginning of all things. Compared to European civilization, the United States was founded in a cultural void. Only in this fertile and unplanted cultural soil could an *individualistic*, *non-historical*, and *private* power principle grow up and thrive, and in this case, the principle was *money*.

Public office or spoils of war?

In America there is no public office, at least not since Andrew Jackson set the precedent of treating office-holding as 'spoils', and to the victor go the spoils. This rejects the idea of public office as a *responsible service* and makes those who hold office the mighty victors of a conflict who now, by right, get to enjoy the benefits of their struggle, and it was always a private and partisan struggle.

A republic ex nihilo.

Americans view the constitution much like Protestants in general view the Bible: not as the product of a pre-existing community, but as a living, breathing, creator-Idea that descends from on high and

gives birth to a way of life. In England the constitution is simply the acknowledgement of a reality that has developed over centuries, a kind of legal chronicle not responsible for the creation of anything entirely new. This is also (with certain important qualifications) what the Bible has been for Catholicism from the beginning. The Church preceded the Bible and so the Bible was never taken as the 'origin' or basis of the faith. Rather, the foundation was in the pre-existing community and the teaching it received from Christ, and the Bible was manifest to and through the Church, and not the reverse. For Protestantism, however, since it had rejected the Church and its Tradition, the Bible had to become something that it never was: the product had to become the producer. The Bible had to be placed before the Church instead of after it, as one of its productions, and had to become the source—the only source—for Christian doctrine and conduct. In other words, the Letter had to replace the Spirit. In fact Protestantism is a kind of combination of idolatry of the letter combined with individualistic rationalist sentimentalism. To return to the American constitution, we can say that it differs from the English one by being viewed as a creative force that brought into being a way of life. The Constitution is the American Bible, but it is a Protestant Bible and not a Catholic one. This is why Americanism and Catholicism have never been able to live in harmony.

In Europe, the forces of tradition were opposed to the constitutionalizing movement that swept over the Western world because for them it represented the antithesis of tradition, as the Letter is the antithesis of the Spirit. It is not so much that constitutions are faulty, but that they are faulty when they are seen as the sole guide and are seen as replacements for Tradition. In other words, it is not constitutions but ideological constitutionalism that is to be feared, and that is precisely what Europe was dealing with. A similar battle occurred within the religious sphere with the Bible, what it was, and what Protestantism made of it. In other words, the Constitution became the equivalent, on the political level, of what Protestantism made the Bible on the religious level: an immortal document that hovers above any real, living authority, and theoretically replaces that authority, making it not only irrelevant but *irreverent* to acknowledge that authority; the document speaks for itself, in some mystical way, and bestows great liberties (the equivalent of political grace) on everyone who remains faithful to it.

Constitutions, understood in this way, made tradition unnecessary and rendered its existence evil, since traditional authority was a living and breathing and teaching thing, and would constantly be

offering specific interpretations of the Holy Document that would not be pleasing to all. That was the underlying conflict in Europe. In America, with no tradition to speak of and therefore no traditionalists to fight for it, there was no 'alternative point of view' to oppose the Constitutionalizing movement. That is why the Constitution seems 'commonsense' and 'the obvious best solution' and it explains the peculiar American blindness to any alternative point-of-view, a blindness that prevails to this day.

The limits of intention in a changing world.

Whenever we consider the 'intentions of the Founders' it is essential to remember that there were at that time numerous *social actualities* which effectively limited political participation by race, property, education, and so on. The continuance of these actualities was assumed by the authors of the Constitution, and the fact that they did not, in fact, continue renders the intentions of the Founders null and void.

This world is not their world and our circumstances and political processes have only a *historical* connection to theirs. Most people struggle to grasp this because, as we've already mentioned, Americans consider the Constitution on par with a doctrinal treatise, or with Holy Scripture, the lessons of which are universal and timeless, and the fact that the authors of the document were not timeless does not matter.

Times change and new mechanics are introduced. For example, the Constitution recognized neither parties nor universal suffrage. That it does not forbid them only speaks to the limits of the imaginations of the authors, and not to forward-thinking.

The Constitution explicitly delegated certain powers to the central government, and explicitly reserved all others to the states. But even in the nation's youth, there were opposing ideas at play and every administration tried in some way to increase the powers of the head in relation to the body. In the early Federalist government of Washington and Hamilton, Hamilton introduced the idea of 'implied powers' of the central government, which was an idea as blatantly opportunistic as it sounds. This sat in opposition the idea of 'state's rights' and a 'strong central government' and eventually led to the Secession War.

Another point of departure from anything the Founders could have imagined was the control over the laws of the nation wielded by the judiciary. It was Chief Justice Marshall who introduced the idea, which would become common practice, that the judiciary could disrupt the laws of the entire nation by declaring a thing 'unconstitutional'. This was a purely negative power, since it allowed the judiciary to delete laws but not make any, and in that sense its only function was to reduce order and increase chaos, but chaos in the legal systems of the states is beneficial for the central government. In this respect, the judiciary is the great *destabilizer*.

It would be correct to say that the Founders would not have foreseen the development of the judicial veto, since they specifically wrote into the Constitution a separation between the judicial and legislative, but at the same time this development is not foreign to their mentality. They were, by and large, all lawyers, and the Constitutional Convention was formed almost entirely by members of that profession. The Constitution is not a document of practical political wisdom, but of legal phraseology. That is an important point, especially if we recall that one of America's most long standing problems is an insistence on abstraction and legalism over actual realities.

American legalism meant that, as things developed, many problems were referred to the legal system on the pseudo-religious assumption that they would be dealt with impartially and the outcome would be free of human weaknesses like prejudice and ignorance. This is the same type of ridiculous legal thinking that would think it wise to have a jury of twelve random citizens decide guilt or innocence in immensely complex legal cases.

Law is the result of politics, traditionally. American legalism, with its unique employment of the judiciary, created a situation in which the law and those responsible for its maintenance and interpretation, are enabled to steer politics. Or, to connect all the dots, we can say that the judiciary was susceptible to significant political influence, and once the practice of judiciary veto became the norm, that susceptibility was quickly exploited by various political forces, namely parties and money. Now law is still the result of politics, which is a result of money.

There are no culture wars.

In the years leading up to the Civil War, the driving political issue was real and organic, consisting in the balance of power between the North and the South. It was an early polarization due to the fact that there were two different economies and two different cultures. With the victory of the North, that issue died and no 'organic' political issue has ever taken its place.

Today there is only party politics, and parties represent money. Instead of the struggle between organic unities we have the struggle of money against money—abstraction against abstraction. Parties surround this battle with rhetoric and propaganda, which formulates 'the issues' over which the two parties will fight, because without these 'issues' there could be nothing to vote about. But all of this is spectacle. In other words, 1861 was the last time anything significant, in terms of culture, was at stake in a political battle, because the battle was between two different cultural viewpoints. Today nothing cultural is at stake and that is why no matter who wins the general state of things remains the same. There are no currents that really oppose one another; everyone is 'mainstream'.

It is not uncommon to hear about 'culture wars' today but in fact there are no culture wars. The battle is over a small plot of 'moral ground', staked out by a particular group. We can grant that one group is wrong and another is right, but the whole war takes place in the same vicinity, on the same 'cultural plane' and at a very low elevation. Today's culture wars are not so much 'one culture against another' as they are a battle for control over a single, fundamentally homogenous anti-culture.

We can summarize by saying that the theory of the 'separation of powers' has meant, in the American practice of government, the control of all branches by the same interests, or else the division of the branches into two warring factions. When the former occurs, the theory is null but has the appearance of functionality; when the latter occurs, nothing functions and so it appears that things are only temporarily 'broken'. In both cases, however, the theory is proven utterly impracticable. It is another counterproof of the Enlightenment's assumption that a society can be created which does not depend on some authority, and creating a regime on this false assumption, the wielders of authority are merely allowed to operate behind the scenes.

America no longer deals in 'true politics', but rather wastes its energies in a kind of 'inner politics' wherein it consumes itself. Nothing real is ever decided, no action taken, no policy enacted, except accidentally as a means to the end of re-election or as a chip in the party-power bargaining process.

Or, to summarize in a different way, American politics is simply 'business', and by the time Donald Trump became president, he was merely the avatar of what American political activity has been for quite some time: a battle of the wealthiest, most opportunistic men in the country trying to amass more and more power to themselves.

The development of lobbying.

Where politics is implicitly 'all about the money' but explicitly about ideals and votes, the institution of 'lobbying' naturally appears. Lobbying today is legitimized and openly accepted as a means of influencing the development of legislation. In a true politics, this practice is called bribery, and the conspicuous absence of any concept of bribery from contemporary political vocabulary speaks volumes. We have no concept of bribery because what that term signifies is the basis of our system.

If electioneering is money-at-work leading up to and during an election, lobbying is money-at-work after the election ends. If the elected officials are (nominally, at least) the representatives of the people, lobbyists are the representatives of money sent to the legislature to assure that money has the final say.

One of the weaknesses of the party system is that it reduces parties to two only, and that means two candidates for each election. This means that if a private interest has enough money to influence both sides so that it can put its own man forward on each side, then it can't lose. And this has often been the case.

Destiny or dumb luck?

What I've already said about America's almost total lack of 'true politics' is true of its inner form, in terms of its participants, the issues at stake, and the mode of operation. This does not mean that the American regime has no relations with the outside world, however. What it does mean is that these relations will be skewed in a similar manner and will represent the 'other side of the coin', so to speak.

Just as inner politics in America is little more than a winner-takes-all battle for control of power after the manner of competition between businessmen, with moral, social, religious, and human interests only coming to the front as tools of rhetoric in order to get the masses on board, so also with America's external politics: in other words, America's external politics takes on the form of an insatiable imperialism flying under the banner of *ideals*.

Imperialism means war on all fronts and peace within the sphere of the empire. Empire establishes peace by accepting that war never ends and by *leaning into it*. The peace of the Roman Empire was a more or less relative peace, peace within the borders but not on them or outside of them. With that said, America has achieved its vast empire with less bloodshed than its historical analogs. Most of this is due to sheer luck. The hardest war America ever fought was against England in the Revolution. Here the colonies were truly overmatched, but it happened that there were other powers to volunteer assistance, namely France; it also happened that England was involved elsewhere and could not devote its entire strength to the suppression of a rebellion across the ocean. Add to that the fact that there was opposition within England which favored the colonies.

The foreign powers in the New World, aside from the English, were France and Spain, but they were each in the twilight of their military strength and were of little concern for the newly independent government. And much like England, France was to prove unable to focus its energies on the maintenance of power in America, especially once Napoleon re-oriented its focus on the re-creation of a European 'Holy Roman Empire' rather than a colonial one. This is why the small sum he accepted in the Louisiana Purchase was acceptable to him and was, on the other end, a moment of unbelievable luck for the American union.

The United States interpreted all of these fortuitous circumstances through the narrow lens of its latent politico-Calvinism, which is to say, its 'collective predestination' as a member of 'the elect' by God Himself. This attitude would remain with the United States permanently, and it explains both its boldness as well as its inability to question the rightness or righteousness of the power it accumulates to itself. No matter what America does, at least in the eyes of Americans, *Deus Vult!* The elect must rise in the world. This has a double-effect: first, it justifies every political move America makes, since America is identified with Christ-in-the-world and so

cannot have bad motivations and cannot be wrong; second, it means that any opposition to American power is not simple opposition in the political sense, but is an expression of evil plain and simple, and America's enemies are the personification of Satan sent to persecute the elect.

If we take another instance of grand luck in favor of the early development of American power-the War of 1812—we might actually begin to believe the cant about divine election. In this case Napoleon basically enlisted himself into the cause of American empire. England was far too involved with Napoleon at home to worry too much about America's involvement and what would have been a superior military position in America became an opportunity for further expansion of the new nation and led directly to the acquisition of Florida in 1819.

The Monroe Doctrine.

At this point it seemed that the Americans could do nothing too audacious, and to prove it they brought forward the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. This incredible device was essentially an announcement by the United States that it was going to preempt half of the globe for itself. If conditions had not been 'just so', it would have had no effect whatsoever, but here again, the United States found itself conveniently situated outside-but-in-between continental tensions. Had England opposed the doctrine it would have meant nothing, but they supported it because it was in the British interest to dismantle the Spanish colonial empire in Central and South America. It served British policy and so it prevailed. Of course, on the American end this acquiescence was taken not as British instrumentalism but as an expression of *fear* on the part of the European powers.

What we have only briefly outlined here is the formation of a 'tradition of success' in American foreign policy, which could be explained by luck but was explained instead as superiority. This created a certain national boldness and confidence that would go unchallenged for almost a century and would in the meantime continue to affirm that Calvinistic predestined-to-rule sentiment that has been so central to the American identity. When the Monroe Doctrine was finally challenged, America had by that time given itself entirely to militarism and developed a standing army capable of defending what, originally, was a completely indefensible position.

Domestic imperialism.

This expansive-imperialism has unfolded in a very convoluted way and made it impossible to outline in a simple manner the history and tactics of American imperialism. In this light, it becomes very difficult to see the United States as a global force for liberty and equality. One arrives at the same conclusion by looking at its 'inner imperialism', at which we've already hinted and which provides, in miniature, a summary picture of the American concern for lofty values.

In the case of the 'Red Indians,' we could summarize by repeating the formula used by the early Americans themselves, which is: "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." As with the negro race, the natives were, from the beginning, never really considered people. It seems that they were instead seen as a kind of personification of the wildness of 'the frontier,' and as part of the conquest of that frontier they needed to be relocated, if possible and convenient, or else simply demolished. Since the native peoples were not often cooperative in this project, demolition was usually the result.

The imperial instinct in America could not be altered and could not but expand itself. It was not a matter of premeditation but of impulse. If the Europeans had not sold their holdings for money payments, war would have been the result. Since the Indians had not interest in selling their own homelands, since that would have left them not only without homes but without identity or livelihood, the result was violence. For Americans the practical attitude has always been that Might Makes Right and if every last Indian had to be slaughtered in order to make way for the expansive impulse, then it was again justified and inevitable, hence the doctrine of Manifest Destiny.

Treaty after treaty was made with the Indians through which they would make some concession, move to some smaller claim, and agree to peace. The United States, however, simply could not control its impulse and although we can't say for sure if every treaty was signed knowing it would be broken, we can say that every treaty was sooner or later broken, and in almost every case it was broken by whites. Always a frontier was laid down that Americans agreed not to pass, and always the imperialist impulse prevailed. War was often the result, and since the Americans wielded a technological superiority, only extinction or complete submission on the part of the Indians could bring peace. It took a century-long series of wars

before the Indian finally gave up his dignity in order to survive as an anachronism on small parcels of land without culture or political power, but eventually it was done.

We insist, then, that the American dealings with the Indians are the measure of its benevolence toward 'the other'; the measure of its commitment to fair-dealing and justice in war; the measure of its greed. Most importantly, however, the American near genocide of the native people is, in miniature, a measure of its attitude and its actions throughout the world. It is benevolent when benevolence is beneficial; it is diplomatic when its enemy is already defeated; it is humanitarian when humanitarianism requires no real sacrifice; it is none of these when its lust for empire is resisted.

Imperialism as instinct.

Especially during its development, American imperialism was *instinctive* rather than calculated and deliberate. This rendered it deniable because it meant that no public official ever stood up and argued for an American Empire. It is still denied today. We could chalk this up to cognitive dissonance—to the inability of the mind to entertain two completely opposed beliefs at once. America has always self-identified as the light of the world, as a force for freedom, self-government, and human dignity, and so, how could it possibly acknowledge that its actions were directly opposed to these values, especially when that image is so flattering, and the alternative is not? This is why we see politicians coming very close to speaking the truth, but then fading into the background. Regarding the annexation of the Philippines, William Jennings Bryan observed: "We cannot repudiate the principle of self-government in the Philippines without weakening that principle here." In other words, when we destroy our principles elsewhere, we destroy them in ourselves. But the instinct had already been given full expression by the time this speech was delivered (August 8, 1900) and it may have received applause and nods of acknowledgement, just as it certainly would today, but it altered nothing and led to no epiphanies of self-knowledge. No policy was altered, because American imperialism has never been a matter of explicit policy, but of subconscious impulse.

We all know of those people who act aggressively toward others and whose aggression is blatantly obvious to every observer, but who, in spite of this, sincerely believe themselves peacemakers, gentle and meek in every conflict. One's instincts and one's self-understanding

can easily be at odds, and as mentioned already, American politico-Calvinism has ensured that Americans will never search very far in terms of self-understanding and reflection. Calvinistic predestination is in fact directly opposed to an objective evaluation of one's motives and actions. To question such things is to question the will of God. Thus, Americans were consciously 'freedom loving and humanitarian' but objectively imperialistic and brutal toward anyone standing in the way of their expansion, *freedom and democracy be damned*.

The instinct is deniable, and it wins because it is deniable. The American instinct is still, at least in the popular mind, denied, but it is always in the driver's seat.

It speaks volumes about the American mentality that they can only interpret diplomacy as a response to fear, rather than simply good statesmanship. Every good turn America receives is, in the eyes of Americans, due to fear of American power, and every bad turn is, on the other hand, an attempt at exploiting American generosity. In an individual we would interpret this kind of thinking as egocentric insecurity. In a nation, it is the same.

During the 30's, the expansive impulse led Americans into the Mexican Empire where they separated Texas from Mexico, which was then incorporated into the union within a decade. Oregon was also added by 1846. America, not yet done with Mexico, decided to direct itself toward the Pacific, which meant canals and railroads in Central America. Mexico "caused" a war over these issues in the same way that many wars would be caused after: by refusing to simply bow to the desires of the United States. After the acquisition of Alaska from Russia for a paltry sum, the border with Mexico was again rounded off through the Gadsden Purchase. And so, through the second half of the 19th century, the American Empire was at work: Hawaii, Chile, Cuba, Colombia, China, Japan, Siam, Samoa. In 1898, Spanish possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific were attached, and the Spanish-American War resulted not in the liberation of any peoples but in the transfer of the Spanish colonial empire to the American colonial empire. The Philippines. Tutuila. Guam. Wake. Midway. Ports were bombarded and wherever necessary troops were deployed. Such are the demands of freedom and liberty for all… which is to say, all *Americans*.

The Boston Tea Party.

To understand how economic and political motives are combined, confused, interpreted, and re-interpreted, we can look at the Boston Tea Party.

We have but one first-hand account of the event, published in 1834 under the title: *A retrospect of the Boston tea-party, with a memoir of George R. T. Hewes, a survivor of the little band of patriots who drowned the tea in Boston harbour in 1773*. It is a lengthy title for such a small work. It centers on the life and witness of one George Hewes, whose account of the events is recorded by historian James Hawkes. The most significant corrective that this account provides is an economic one, for the act itself was a protest against what was perceived to be an unjust tax—there is no doubt about that—but what needs to be added to the picture is that, in addition to the government responsible for imposing the tax, there was also another party in the affair. Keep in mind that the men who "drowned the tea" were not destroying the property of England, but that of a massive corporation called the East India Company.

The East India Company had a government-reinforced monopoly on tea being imported to the colonies (importation from other sources had been deemed illegal). However, when the revolt against the tea tax began, the result was an effective boycott of East India tea, since the refusal of the colonies to pay the tax amounted to a refusal to buy English tea (the East India Company's tea was stockpiled in England and then shipped through vendors to the colonies). As a result of this boycott, tea began to pile up in the East India Company's warehouses, and in fact threatened the general welfare of the company.

In the meantime, Dutch tea was being imported illegally (smuggled) into the colonies. This had been an ongoing problem for both the East India Company and the English government because it obviously short-circuited the monopoly of the former and avoided the taxation of the latter. In short, it defeated the corporate-state collusion that had formed to the benefit of both at the expense of the colonists.

Until this point there had been a six pence per pound duty on exports from England to the colonies, and a three pence duty on introduction to the colonies. This made the smuggled tea impossible to beat from a pricing standpoint. Remember also that the tea was

normally distributed amongst smaller private vendors and was not exported directly to the colonies by corporate ships.

To solve the problem, the company petitioned the English government and a deal was struck that would allow the East India Company to undercut the "smugglers" of the Dutch product while also asserting the right of England to tax the colonies, thus re-establishing the collusion.

According to Hewes:

> The company…received permission to transport tea, free of all duty, from Great Britain to America, and to introduce it there on paying a duty of three pence.
>
> Hence it was no longer the small vessels of private merchants, who went to vend tea for their own account in the ports of the colonies, but, on the contrary, ships of an enormous burthen, that transported immense quantities of this commodity, which, by the aid of the public authority, might, as they supposed, easily be landed, and amassed in suitable magazines. Accordingly the company sent to its agents at Boston, New- York, and Philadelphia, six hundred chests of tea, and a proportionate number to Charleston, and other maritime cities of the American continent. The colonies were now arrived at the decisive moment when they must cast the dye, and determine their course in regard to parliamentary taxes.
>
> For, as has been observed in a preceding page, if the tea was permitted to be landed, it would be sold and the duty consequently must have been paid. It was therefore resolved to exert every effort to prevent the landing.

This new measure would also, in practice, work against the smaller vendors by virtually excluding them from the picture, since it would allow the East India Company to ship directly to their agents in the colonies. And so Hewes remarks that the colonists were receiving petitions from small business owners in England due to,

> "…jealousy at the opportunity offered the East India Company, to make immense profits to their prejudice. These opposers of the measure in England wrote therefore to America, encouraging a strenuous resistance."

And so while it is obvious that "taxation without representation" was a factor in the event, it is equally true that this is a drastic oversimplification of the problem. As evidenced from the common ground between English business owners and the colonists, we can say that the protest was not simply against a "tax," but was against what we'd call today a "corporate tax loophole." The protagonists in the story are the colonists, to be sure, but included are also the small business owners of England, and the would-be entrepreneurs who had taken to smuggling the Dutch product. The antagonists? A marriage of greed between the crown and a corporation seeking to monopolize a market for their exclusive benefit.

All of this matters because it provides evidence for a renewed perspective on the various issues at stake during the Revolution: on this particular point, regarding the Boston Tea Party, we can see that it was instigated by Sam Adams and his hooligans, the Sons of Liberty, but motivated by an unjust collusion between corporation and state, arranged to benefit those two powerful parties while exploiting everyone else. While we have been taught to imagine it as an example of overreach, typical among monarchs and proving the necessity of democracy, it was actually an example of what happens when economic interests are allowed to become so powerful that they are able to dictate foreign policy. So far from being a problem typical of monarchy, this is rather a problem typical of economic Liberalism, that is to say, capitalism. This also shows us how little things have changed, and how far even "Tea Partiers" are from the motivations of the Boston Tea Party. Today America is acknowledged as the "Corporate State" *par excellence*, the home of Walmart, McDonalds, and where it is illegal to buy milk from the farmer down the street. We swallow all of this (literally) and complain about government taxes, never once complaining of the plutocracy (for the aristocracy of Liberal regimes is always a plutocracy) responsible for writing the laws. In short, the enemy was the king, but he was a king of the Liberal era, when money dictates politics, and when kings became the pawns of economic interests. The *Ancien Regime*, which the Revolution is construed to have vanquished, was already dead—what the colonists deposed was its corpse.

For America, politics is nothing other than *corrupt economics*, and this was true even before it had a political identity of its own. This is typically the result of weak political structures in the presence of powerful economic interests. The economic factors predominate and determine political development. In other words, America is not

constituted as a political order but rather an economic order, and political battles take place on the grounds of finance and for financial stakes, for reasons known first and foremost to the financiers in control of trade.

The problem of instability.

One of the primary problems for American imperialism has been the fact that empire means war and war requires a stable internal order. This was the advantage of Rome at its height. Internal disorder normally means the death of any imperialistic endeavor. America, with its inner politics being a perpetual chaos with no "long view" to speak of, since every leader at any given time is concerned with nothing other than re-election and enrichment, meant that leadership is always concerned with the now--with what is beneficial at this particular moment, and what opinions are popular *today*. This should have led to American collapse long ago, but again the fact of America's isolation and its astounding luck for the past two centuries meant that it could proceed without setback in its empire-building. It was successful, and this success has built an immense self-confidence, but it is always hanging in the balance and its continuance presupposed the absence of any real threat. That would eventually change, but not for some time.

Summary of American empire building.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the situation was thus: America had been engaged in successful imperialism from Central America to the Far East, and was isolated in the sense that other world powers were not perceived as a threat. These powers were: England, France, Germany, Austria, Russia, and Japan. America could not easily be attacked by any of these, nor could America pose any imminent threat to them except through allies or by *proxies*, with the latter becoming the preferred instrument over time. This meant that America, although established as a world power, could only play a subordinate role in the world war that was to come.

We can summarize by saying that American empire-building was non-traditional in kind. It was not religious or explicit. It was achieved on the basis of a feeling, and the American success-feeling has always been centered on the economic. America did not need its empire declared openly or structured as such, all lands annexed to itself. It only needed certain tiny islands, ports, avenues of trade, and a canal. That is perhaps why Canada was left as Canada and Mexico

left to be Mexico. America was content to leave political entities intact so long as it could be more powerful than any other world power in a sphere larger than that of any of its competitors. It could be content in this because this kind of imperialism allowed for a profound economic advantage, and an economic empire proved to be more powerful than any political empire ever constructed. A further advantage to this style of empire-building, wherein economic interest is sought above any political ordering, and wherein political chaos in a neighbor can be more advantageous than to actually conquer them, is that the entire project can be realized without ever mentioning it to oneself or to anyone else, and where it can actually be denied with some success.

As an example of America's ambivalence and in most cases outright confusion about its actions and motivations, we can cite the doctrine of 'non-recognition,' whereby America stated that it would refuse to recognize territories taken by force of arms. It did not matter that the entirety of the American empire, and America itself, was the result of armed force. This remains true even when there were 'purchases' and treaties made, since these were in almost every case only transacted due to the fact of American military power and the willingness of the government to use it should diplomacy ever fail to get it what it deemed advantageous.

Uniformity and control.

After all of what has been said about American government and its conduct at home and abroad, one might ask how these things play out in the minds of the people, as opposed to the minds of the leaders. If we acknowledge as 'the leaders' those who sit behind the politicians but are not politicians themselves, then it is not difficult to understand their motivations. But what of the man on the street? How does he come to accept these conditions? It is no stretch, after all, to say that it is the lower classes who provide the manpower that makes all of this possible. The upper classes have not, since the Middle Ages, joined in the mayhem as fodder for their wars. How can those in power exert such an influence and control such a mass? First and foremost, by building up a psychological uniformity the likes of which the world has never seen.

In spite of all the conflict and the rhetoric about 'melting pots', the American people tend toward uniformity. They use the same ideas, wear the same clothes, watch the same television shows. In this sense the American people has, perhaps more than any other, been

reduced to the condition of a 'herd'. They are schooled in herds, and all schooled according to an identical syllabus. Then, once graduated, they go off to work in herds. When war comes, they are drafted in herds, and they die that way. The success of this push toward uniformity has been astounding, and it owes its success mostly to the fact that America (and not Nazi Germany, as is supposed) was the pioneering nation when it came to propaganda. Propaganda was born of advertising and found a place for itself in society by inventing the profession called 'public relations.' That is why I have devoted a separate section to the psychology of the propagandized, in order to discuss that subject in depth.

LIBERALISM AND LIBERTY-WORSHIP

♦♦♦

General remarks.

Under this heading we intend to discuss liberty as a political *ideal* and not as a human reality. We have in mind the type of liberty exemplified by Enlightenment Liberalism, and the same which Pope Leo XIII was addressing when he said,

> But many there are who follow in the footsteps of Lucifer, and adopt as their own his rebellious cry, 'I will not serve'; and consequently substitute for true liberty what is sheer and most foolish license. Such, for instance, are the men belonging to that widely spread and powerful organization, who, usurping the name of liberty, style themselves Liberals.[1]

The distinction is important because what passes for 'political liberty' is mostly an illusion, while Pope Leo's 'true liberty'—liberty as a social or spiritual reality—is something quite different. The latter must be addressed in terms of self-knowledge, which we will deal with in a separate section. What, then, of the ideal of modern political liberty?

A problem of definition.

Regarding Liberalism, the first problem that confronts us regarding Liberalism is one of definition. Depending on where we are and to whom we are speaking, we will find that people attach different meanings to the term. Unfortunately, these meanings are often not entirely coherent, and they rarely take into consideration the historical development of the Liberal philosophical tradition, which is to say that the term 'Liberal' is too often applied in an entirely conventional way. When used in this manner, Liberalism typically means whatever the speaker or group wants it to mean, regardless of how confused or inappropriate this may be with respect to the historical meaning.

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[1] Pope Leo XIII, *Libertas.*

To explain, let us quote from the Encyclopedia Britannica's entry on "Liberalism":

> In the United States, Liberalism is associated with the welfare-state policies of the New Deal program of the Democratic administration of Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt, whereas in Europe it is more commonly associated with a commitment to limited government and *laissez-faire* economic policies.[2]

What we see here is that the Atlantic Ocean has somehow divided the philosophy of Liberalism into two philosophies superficially opposing each other. Obviously this will not do for any precise discussion of our situation or the Liberal ideas that have formed it; and so, before we continue, we need to ask which of these understandings is correct, if either: the European or the American. To do this we need to go back to the origins of the Liberal creed.

As we have said, Liberalism as a philosophical tradition begins at the Enlightenment, and more specifically with a philosopher named John Locke (1632-1704), who has been called the father of Liberalism. The central principles of this school were, originally: individualism, democratic elections, free markets, insistence on free speech and various other civil rights, popular sovereignty, separation between church and state, and a high emphasis on equality and liberty.

In American politics, these values are presently divided out between both parties, whether 'conservative' or avowedly 'Liberal'. Both parties insist on individualism, free speech, liberty, popular sovereignty, and democracy. Each of them has a proprietary list of 'rights', which they believe to be owed to them by their fellows and by the government.

In this way they share Liberalism in the same way that King Solomon attempted to share the contested infant, which is to say, piecemeal. Overall, they agree on fundamentals, but they each interpret the fundamentals with their own (sometimes drastically varied) nuance. For example, the are both highly individualistic in emphasis, but the Right (the 'conservatives') emphasizes primarily an *economic* sort of individualism, and so market autonomy becomes their pet project, usually under the aegis of Capitalism. The Left (adopting the 'Liberal' label) emphasizes a more domestic sort

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[2] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Liberalism," Girvetz, Harry K.

of moral individualism, and so gay marriage, abortion, and secularism become their predominating values. *Both parties are, at heart, thoroughgoing Liberals, but they differ on the area of application and the extent to which they are willing to remain consistent*.

To return to the story of Solomon and the infant, we can say that in any case, much is lost. The Right is willing to sacrifice all values to their belief in the market, which is to say to Capitalism, since, after all, Capitalism is nothing but *economic Liberalism*. Yet they contradict themselves by their efforts to promote religion in the public sphere and by denying the sexual autonomy of certain individuals. In these latter cases, they betray their Liberalism and become hypocrites.

The Left, on the other hand, is willing to sacrifice all values to their belief in personal autonomy at the expense all traditional or religious norms, and here they are truly Liberal; but much like the Right, they also contradict themselves when they fight to protect the poor and the natural environment, because a coherent Liberalism has no room for such a liberty-limiting regulations. There is no *common good* in Lockean Liberalism.

In sum, when we speak of Liberalism in this study, we must step outside of the arbitrary usage that predominates in American speech, which is internally incoherent. From a historical standpoint, to use the term in this way is to render is completely meaningless. When we refer to Liberalism, then, we must be understood as referring to the continuous and wide-ranging tradition of Enlightenment thought, a tradition which has gone to form the political and social consensus of the modern world, for there is no developed nation that is not a child of this original Liberalism. It informs and dictates the positions and goals of both the American Right and the American Left. If the former seems by its rhetoric to despise it, we must simply remember Davila's observation: "Today's conservatives are nothing more than Liberals who have been ill-treated by democracy."[3]

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[3] Nicolás Gómez Dávila, *Scholia to an Implicit Text*, aphorism 1208. [Please note that there are two versions of Davila's aphorisms. In this instance I have cited the 2001, Spanish edition, which contains numbered aphorisms. I will also cite from a 2013 English-Spanish "bilingual" edition which has the same

Odd as this all may seem, Oswald Spengler explained how this style of Liberal-conservatism comes about:

> there arises the defensive figure of the Conservative party, copied from the Liberal, dominated completely by the latter's forms, bourgeois-ized without being bourgeois, and obliged to fight with rules and methods that Liberalism has laid down. It has the choice of handling these means better than its adversary or of perishing.[4]

The Right calls itself conservative, but its conservatism is only a matter of temperament and not of philosophy. Its adherents are simply Liberals who prefer inertia.

The discovery of the self.

When approaching our difficult subject, which is the modern *fixation* on political liberty, it is useful to identify certain *causes* and how they might contribute to our present way of thinking. When we do this, the first thing we notice is that we are *inescapably self-centered beings*. As Colin Morris put it:

> The student of the Greek Fathers or of Hellenistic philosophy is likely to be made painfully aware of the difference between their starting-point and ours. Our difficulty in understanding them is largely due to the fact that they had no equivalent to our concept of 'person,' while their vocabulary was rich in words which express community of being...Whereas Aristotle began from the polis, the city which to him was the natural unit of society, the 'classical' Western political philosophers (among whom one must count Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau) assumed that the individual person and his rights pre-existed any form of society.[5]

Of course, man has always been taught by world religions that he has a tendency toward egoism, from Buddhism to Christianity, but at the same time man did not completely sever himself from his fellow, dead or alive, thanks to the supra-individual emphasis of traditional cultures. We can even say that traditionally men were

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title but different content and does not have numbered aphorisms. For the latter edition, page numbers will be referenced.]

[4] Spengler, op. cit., p. 450.

[5] Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050-1200* (New York: Harper, 1972), pp. 2-3.

more naturally aware of their super-nature, hence the respect for ancestors and those already in the next life, a 'superstition' foreign to the modern mentality.[6] We differ in that it is no longer possible to make such an assumption: our self-centeredness is almost complete. Nothing that exceeds the individual level has any reality for us. Because the growth of this new, more comprehensive *self-centeredness* immediately preceded the birth of Liberalism, and in a way prepared the cultural soil for its establishment, it is useful to pause on it before tackling Liberalism specifically.

Roughly speaking, the process in question—the 'discovery of the self'—has its origins in the European Middle Ages, specifically the 11th and 12th centuries. It was expressed in every area of life, not only in politics, but also in art and literature as well.

Take, for example, the fact that our modern literature is always based on the individual and his relationships, whereas the Greek forms seem to care very little for these aspects of narrative. As Morris explains in his excellent work, *The Discovery of the Individual*: "Greek tragedy was a drama of circumstance, whereas the Western tragedy is essentially a drama of character."[7]

Compare the style and development of the plot in Oedipus with that of Shakespeare's Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello. In the latter we hear constantly of inner and relational turmoil; in the former, the concern is mainly with *destiny* and cosmic irony. The ancient themes were universal rather than personal.

During the same period, we see the rise of autobiography.[8] We see also, in the church, new developments in the practice of confession. Until the 11th century we did not see the emphasis on self-examination and sincere contrition that would come to predominate during that period. Confession had been a more external and public sacrament. During the Middle Ages, it was to transform from a public exercise to a more private and internal affair, which is to say,

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[6] This is why Paul could speak so easily of a "cloud of witnesses" while contemporary Protestantism has absolutely no idea what to do with this notion.

[7] Morris, op. cit., p. 4.

[8] There were older works, such as Augustine's *Confessions*, which are undoubtedly 'autobiographical', but they are exceptions that prove the rule, and the form of the autobiography did not become 'popular' until the modern era.

its focus migrated from the collective aspects of sin to the individual. This transition can be clearly marked by observing the attacks of Peter Abelard on the system of public confession. He does not complain that the practice was too severe or embarrassing to the penitent, as we might imagine, but that *it was not deep enough*, it was too ceremonial and neglected the sincerity of the individual in his remorse. Intimately connected to this development, we see the first interests in what would become the field of psychology.

So thoroughgoing was this transition that a theological giant such as Abelard could title one of his most original works: *Ethics: or, Know Thyself* (1135). The title reflects the transforming emphasis on the self, and it inevitably led its author to try and make *intention* the foundation of morality. For Abelard, and for many after him, it was a man's intent that mattered when it came to moral culpability, even going so far as to suggest that the men who crucified Christ were not sinning, since they believed that what they were doing was just, even though, were this true, it would render Christ's words at that moment pointless: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" has no meaning if their ignorance in itself absolves them.

In this way, man's perception of life was slouching toward the *subjective*. In fact, it was not until Pope St. John Paul II condemned this sort of morality, labeling it 'consequentialism' in the 1993 document *Veritatis Splendor,* that the Church officially and decisively rejected *intention* as the sole criterion of moral culpability.

This is not to say that the Church of the Middle Ages followed Abelard on this point. We only mention his error because it manifests the tendency we are studying; his ideas were in fact opposed in his own time. For it was at this point in history that the tide of the self crashed against the philosophical mountain that was St. Thomas Aquinas.

The philosophical weaponry that Aquinas contributed to the West may never be appreciated in its magnitude, even considering its weaknesses.[9] By synthesizing Aristotle's objectivity with Christian subjectivity, he successfully fused and harmonized what at that

[9] We will at various points in this manual explain problems of Thomistic thought, not to diminish its value but to put it in perspective and avoid the problematic tendency of some Catholics to grant it a virtual monopoly on Catholic theological expression.

moment threatened to dismantle Christian philosophy altogether. His fusion enabled man to be both subject and object, in the proper relationships and at the proper time, to be vincibly or invincibly ignorant of acts which were right or wrong. He reconciled Abelard's insistence that *intention counts* with the objective nature of good and evil. In St. Thomas we find man and Man, we find the individual both as *person* and as *member of a human community*. Finally, he showed us through his development of law—eternal, natural, and human—how man could be both material and spiritual, natural and supernatural.

For all this, it was still a highly rationalistic approach, and in the end the Thomistic synthesis decomposed back into its constituent elements and became a dichotomy: man is either individual or collective, animal or angel. When Thomism fell, the possibility of a 'religious life' separate from 'ordinary life', a harbinger of materialism, first became possible in the minds of political philosophers, and with this conception was born the possibility of a secular state—the first seeds of the 'wall of separation', a wall which even contemporary Catholic authors attempt to straddle.

Let us now step back to observe the long-term results of the process in its two extremes, which can be identified as egoism (man's personal aspect) and nationalism (man's collective aspect):

On a personal level, the victory of the self has led to acute self-consciousness of a negative sort. In the words of John Updike, writing of Franz Kafka, who exemplified this condition through his writing and life:

> The century…has been marked by the idea of 'modernism'—a self-consciousness new among centuries, a consciousness of being new…a sensation of anxiety and shame whose center cannot be located and therefore cannot be placated; a sense of an infinite difficulty within things, impeding every step; a sensitivity acute beyond usefulness, as if the nervous system, flayed of its old hide of social usage and religious belief, must record every touch as pain.[10]

The experience of life as a *social* affair had its comforts. If a man lived in a healthy community that acknowledged its bonds, then he

[10] John Updike, Foreword to *Franz Kafka: The Complete Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), ix.

was never existentially alone. Even in his religious life, his sin was in part a social sin—he was *fallen* but the world was fallen with him—and his relationship with Christ was not a 1-to-1 exchange but an intermingling of cosmic degrees in such a way that the individual disappeared and the two were "one body."

With the onset of *selfhood*, this supra-individual (and thus properly 'social') perception of reality could not persist. Today, the best the Christian can hope for is the "personal savior." He takes the full weight of life on himself, stripping himself of the insulation that a co-experience of life could have offered, and he suffers for it.

In the opposite extreme, this cocooning led to the envelopment of the collective aspect of man's psyche. Whatever remained of his social awareness became prone to an insecure self-consciousness. Once this happened, a new hypersensitivity of one's separateness was made manifest in what, on the political level, would become *nationalism*.

As the formation of the national self proceeded, the unity of Christendom fractured and gave way to 'nation-states', each attempting to satisfy a pandemic lust for self-consciousness in the collective sphere, a need that previous societies had apparently never felt. Just as the self-conscious man becomes automatically insecure, and therefore combative in the presence of his peers, so the self-conscious nation becomes suspicious of everyone around it. In this way, the seeds of alienation and strife were planted in the soil of the West. They had only to germinate and flourish.

Secularism and the invention of religion.

Without anticipating what we will have to say in a later section devoted exclusively to the relationship between Church and State, we cannot avoid mentioning that subject here because it is central to Liberal theory. Here we will cite Cortés:

> As regards the Liberal school, I will merely say of it, that in its profound ignorance it despises theology, and not because it is not theological in its way, but because, though it is, it does not know it. This school has not yet comprehended, and probably will never comprehend, the close link that unites divine and human things, the great relationship which political things have with social and religious questions, and the dependence which

> all problems relative to government have on those others which refer to God, the Supreme Legislator of all human associations.[11]

As the natural-supernatural dichotomy became prevalent, so also did the notion that religious life could be separated from so-called "ordinary life." As difficult as it is for us to understand, being educated from the cradle in the mold of Liberalism, the concept of religion as we understand it had at a certain point *to be invented*.

In previous ages, there was simply *life*, and life had its intermingling degrees including a mundane material aspect as well as a transcendent or spiritual aspect. The religious dimension was mysterious but omnipresent and it has *experiential weight*. It was not some superadded *belief* of which a person became convinced, a kind of philosophical afterthought, but was a premise that ran through everything else as the superstructure of reality: all questions were in some way religious questions. If you followed any line of thought far enough, it terminated in the divine. There was no purely economic life, for every craft had its own patron saint. There was a *theology of work* through which every industrious activity from saddle-making to glassblowing could be seen as an expression of the *true*, and on that basis could be judged as either good or bad, human or inhuman.

Liberalism, having attempted to rationalize and naturalize itself, severed this tie and from that moment on the sacred became excluded from all areas of life beyond that which was officially labeled *religious*, and this religious partition was inevitably very small in proportion to that claimed by 'ordinary life', and which fell conveniently under the purview of the secular authorities of the new nation-states.

But as Cortés observed above, the exclusion of the sacred from public life proved impossible even for those who willed it. Rather than accept banishment, the impulse to worship simply migrated to secular arenas and secular objects, and these became the temples and idols of the pseudo-religion of the Liberal state.

It could not happen overnight. The foundations of a new mythology with a new pantheon had to be laid out, replacing Abraham with Thomas Jefferson, St. Paul with Galileo. Then a new set of rigid ideologies were brought forward to *catechize* the people in this new

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[11] Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essays*, 60.

way of life. Ideologies like democracy, capitalism, socialism, nationalism, etc. Their sacraments are the *vote* and the *pledge of allegiance*. These all promoted new 'doctrines' with new rituals, new dogmas, and new answers to the perennial problems of life, no less demanding than the old, only less satisfying to the pilgrim.

Liberalism and myth.

We have mentioned that in addition to the gradual discovery of the self, a new mythology also had to be built up which would more firmly plant Liberalism in the Western soul. This new mythology which would form the unconscious faith of the new order. Yet a distinction is in order. The mythology in question here is not the traditional type, which is alien to the modern man and has no meaning for him. Instead, we are dealing with a 'wordly myth', one that has its basis in psychology more than divine revelation. It is the 'national myth', myth on the social level. This type of myth was described well by Jacques Ellul:

> The myth expresses the deep inclinations of a society. Without it, the masses would not cling to a certain civilization or its process of development and crisis. It is a vigorous impulse, strongly colored, irrational, and charged with all of man's power to believe. It contains a religious element. In our society the two great fundamental myths on which all other myths rest are Science and History.[12]

Although traditional mythology, which conveys metaphysical truth in a narrative and symbolic form, is only found in the ancient world, we can say that every civilization has a mythology in Ellul's sense, even, and perhaps especially, our own; we differ from the ancients only in the style of the presentation and the *metaphysical level* of the meanings conveyed. Traditional cultures, being personalist in outlook, chose gods and demigods, and they provided detailed narratives in order to explain themselves to themselves (for this is the function of the myth). We moderns, however, prefer abstractions, and so we turn to ideas and processes rather than divine beings. As Jacques Ellul remarked, our foundational ideas—our guiding myths—may be reduced to two: Science and History.

Science, because we look to it as the guardian of and guide to the truth, the director of all our endeavors. If something is not *scientific*,

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[12] Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda*, p. 40. See also pages 116-117 of the same work.

it has no business claiming to be *true*. This development can be attributed in part to the scientific developments of the 18th century. These, combined with the material progress they enabled, fostered an unprecedented degree of optimism about man and his earthly destiny. Hence, along with a materialistic scientism there came a reversal of the old view of history.

No age before our own looked forward to a Golden Age and backward to a Dark Age. Every people previous to us looked backward to Eden and forward to Apocalypse—the Golden Age was the first, and the Dark Age was the last. In this sense, we represent the reversal of all traditional wisdom regarding historical development.[13] And so, whatever the causes that led to this reversal, we now firmly accept the myths of Science and History, which is to say, Materialism and Progress. But these only form a basis, and in the style of the Greeks, we build many sub-myths on this foundation. Ellul continues:

> And based on [the myths of Science and History] are the collective myths that are man's principal orientations: the myth of Work, the myth of Happiness (which is not the same thing as the presupposition of happiness), the myth of the Nation, the myth of Youth, the myth of the Hero.[14]

The myth of Work is that through which productive work of any kind is an unquestionable good. This should be seen as a natural outgrowth of the primary belief in Materialistic Progress. The myth of the Nation, likewise, is but the materialization of social consciousness. In various ways, each separate myth combines in the self-centered man to become an,

> all-encompassing, activating image: a sort of vision of desirable objectives that have lost their material, practical character and have become strongly colored, over-whelming, all-encompassing, and which displace from the conscious all that is not related to it. Such an image pushes man to action precisely because it includes all that he feels is good, just, and

[13] It is interesting that the Hindu scriptures predict just such a reversal of views as an indicator of the Dark Age.

[14] Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda*, p. 40. See also pages 116-117 of the same work.

> true…Eventually the myth takes possession of a man's mind so completely that his life is consecrated to it.[15]

Ellul does not exaggerate when he says that the modern man is religiously *consecrated* to his mythology. Secularism is, as we have already said, a new kind of *faith*. There can only be migrations of the scared—never an elimination of it. And for us the sacred has migrated to these material and ideological myths, and these are further interpreted within the framework of Progress, a view of history that promises future Utopia, if only we keep treading blindly forward, because in a pure materialism more is always better.

Liberalism and ideology.

By the time that all these subtle elements congeal to form a social consciousness, they have settled into a collection of premises—certain patterns of thought—which go to form the preconceptions of the modern man. These prejudices, because they are so deep-seated and because they are shared with everyone around us, take on a guise of false obviousness. We call them 'common sense', even though they would have seemed utterly alien and probably absurd to our ancestors.

These prejudices are uniform across a given society, which is a necessary result of the atomization that follows individualism. The atomized man becomes at the same time simpler in his thought and more open to suggestion. Today everyone in modern society takes it for granted that he thinks for himself, while nonetheless and without noticing it, he always thinks exactly like the man next to him, even if he is vehemently arguing with him over some political talking point. It seems, in fact, that these talking points are provided to a mentally homogenous people to allow them to disagree about things while never diverging from *the implicit script*.

Modern man is an island, in a historical sense. Every society born of revolution is an island, and it is an island that floats, like a thin film, on the surface of history. Such people are always moving, disconnected from all that came before them, unable to put down the roots necessary to pass something on to those who will come after. Every generation has the sense of not belonging, because the island is not in the same place as it was the generate before and so the rules built up by the elders make no sense to the youth. All

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[15] Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda*, p. 31.

mechanisms of cultural inheritance are void. Generations are equal only in being left to their own devices.

In this context the average person becomes incapable of appreciating supra-individual institutions, much less the supra-individual forms of knowledge, which is to say he becomes incapable of utilizing Tradition. His tie to the wisdom of the ages is severed, and he must cope with even the most commonplace things of life, from marriage to childrearing to prayer, as if he were the first man on Earth. Tocqueville observed this in America:

> Amid the continuous shifts which prevail in the heart of a democratic society, the bond which unites generations to each other becomes slack or breaks down; each person easily loses the trail of ideas coming from his forbears or hardly bothers himself about them...As for the effect which one man's intelligence can have upon another's, it is of necessity much curtailed in a country where its citizens, having become almost like each other, scrutinize each other carefully and, perceiving in not a single person in their midst any signs of undeniable greatness or superiority, constantly return to their own rationality as to the most obvious and immediate source of truth. So, it is not merely trust in any particular individual which is destroyed, but also the predilection to take the word of any man at all. Each man thus retreats into himself from where he claims to judge the world.[16]

What a sorry state indeed! And so, in this wretched position, he adopts a new way of dealing with the problems of life: He begins to turn to *general ideas*. Again, Tocqueville can teach us about the process. He begins by discussing the nature of omniscience, which is perfect knowledge:

> God gives no thought at all to human kind in general. He casts a single and separate glance upon all the beings that form the human race, observing in each of them similarities which link him to them and differences which separate him from them. So God has no need for general ideas; that is to say, he never experiences the necessity of grouping a great number of similar objects under one heading so as to think more comfortably.[17]

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[16] Tocqueville, *Democracy*, p. 494.

[17] Ibid., p. 503.

Man does not have this power. He is profoundly limited in his reach and where his reach was once supplemented by thousands of years of authentic tradition, he must now find a different means of arriving at judgments about the world. To do this he haphazardly gathers a few similarities between events and circumstances as they occur, and on these loose correspondences he formulates general rules which, although not very accurate, serve his purpose and allow him to "get by." This way of reasoning becomes his habit, and he mistakes for mental progress what is actually a progressive decay of knowledge:

> General ideas do not bear witness to the strength of human intelligence but rather to its inadequacy for, in nature, beings are not exactly alike; there are no identical facts, no rules which can be applied loosely and in a similar manner to several objects at the same time. General ideas have the wondrous attribute of allowing the human mind to reach swift judgments on a great number of ideas at the same time. On the other hand, they only ever provide the mind with half-baked notions which lose as much in accuracy as they gain in range.[18]

This collection of 'half-baked notions' is called an *ideology*. An ideology is an assortment of 'commonsense' answers to complex problems, forcibly pressed into a contradictory reality. As Davila put it: "Ideologies were invented so that men who do not think can give their opinions."[19]

Liberalism, clearly, is the arch-ideology of the modern world. Its precepts, each of them bursting with pre-packaged rhetorical justifications, each requiring no study and no actual experience of life, are knowns as *equality*, *freedom*, *free markets*, *progress*, *productivity*, *growth*, *universal education*, *democracy*, *universal suffrage, patriotism, free speech*, etc. This list is obviously not exhaustive, but it hangs together by the fact that each element is distilled from the underlying mythology of the modern era, and where the myth impels man to action, the Liberal ideology channels it into those pursuits that accord with its values. All of these values are accepted and pursued without question and without any real study of the relevant subjects—and most certainly without reference to history.

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Dávila, 2001 edition, aphorism 1219.

This leads us to a final observation about the formation of ideology in Liberal regimes, which is that it reinforces man's inherent mental laziness. By providing him the pre-packaged answers to the mysteries of the universe, it convinces him that he can become wise without the effort traditionally needed to acquire wisdom:

> One of the distinctive features of democratic ages is the taste shared by every man for easy success and immediate enjoyment—a trait evident as much in the pursuits of the intellect as in any other. The majority of those who live in times of equality are filled with ambition both vigorous and mild. They wish for immediate success without expending great effort. These contradictory elements lead them to search for general ideas with whose help they congratulate themselves on being able to depict huge objects at little expense and drawing the public's attention with no effort.[20]

Ideology has, from the beginning, been a characteristic of Liberal democratic societies. Just as gravity is imbedded as a law in our physical reality, so the tendency toward this peculiar flavor of ignorance is imbedded in the mental physics of the modern condition.

Lost correlation between right and duty.

If we created a timeline to mark out the evolving relationship between *rights* and *duties*, we would see that, for ancient man, duties were predominant, with rights only coming into play in a *subordinate* or *derived* sense. In many cases we struggle to find any concept of rights whatsoever.

Recognizing the immanence of the divine order, an order which is essentially *supra-individual*, traditional societies always stressed the obligations (duties) implied by this recognition.

We can also recall what we said above regarding the discovery of the self, and point out that it is very difficult to accentuate *rights* over *duties* when you have not yet emphasized the *individual* to whom the rights supposedly belong. It requires a mentality of individualism, out of touch with the transcendent in order, for the illusion of rights to take conceptual form.

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[20] Tocqueville, *Democracy*, p. 507.

Thus, we find that in the modern world, rights are always 'individual rights'. This is conspicuous and indicates a certain anti-communitarian frame of mind, since even if we allowed the existence of rights, would it not follow that there are also collective rights, rights belonging to the community, and that these could not be ignored? And yet they are ignored and even denied.

The ancient world, dominated by a sense of the transcendent, was not dominated so much by a search for special 'prerogatives' as much as it was interested in acquiring the knowledge of the divine and in conforming to the Divine Will insofar as it was known. This implies a concern for *justice* first and foremost, since justice is the *imprint of the divine will on the structure of things*. We see more discussion about the nature of justice in ancient literature and little to none about the individual and his liberties.

Traditional man spoke of obligations owed first to God, and then, by proxy or *derivation*, to king, community, and neighbor. It is this relationship between rights and duties which St. John XXIII tried to emphasize in the modern context, to no avail:

> The natural rights of which We have so far been speaking are inextricably bound up with as many duties, all applying to one and the same person. These rights and duties derive their origin, their sustenance, and their indestructibility from the natural law, which in conferring the one imposes the other...it follows that in human society one man's natural right gives rise to a corresponding duty in other men; the duty, that is, of recognizing and respecting that right. Every basic human right draws its authoritative force from the natural law, which confers it and attaches to it its respective duty. Hence, to claim one's rights and ignore one's duties, or only half fulfill them, is like building a house with one hand and tearing it down with the other.[21]

If the balance was once in favor of *duties* over *rights*, we can say that during the phase of the *discovery of the self* and the rising tide of egoism, this balance was reversed. We will recall how this tide was temporarily stalled by St. Thomas, who, through his synthesis, tried to create a harmonious fusion of right and duty, acknowledging both the outward and inward demands of divine justice. In Thomism

[21] *Pacem in Terris,* sections 28 and 30.

there is a hierarchy of the demands of justice, each taking care to acknowledge the various aspects of reality.

On this subject, we must be extremely careful not to read contemporary concepts into medieval philosophy. St. Thomas spoke of *right* (singular) but his meaning was very far from what people have in mind today when they use the same term. The Thomistic *right* is "the object of justice".[22] Such a *right* is not demanded for oneself but is always "a work that is adjusted to another person."[23] In short, the rights of Thomism (if it is even legitimate to speak of them in the plural) were *social* and although they implied an aspect of individuality they were not characteristically *individualistic*.

Unfortunately, Thomism proved unflattering in comparison to the humanism of the Enlightenment, with its naïve optimism about political systems and its denial of fallen nature. It could not last.

There is also the problem of popular psychology. 'The man in the street' is mostly untouched by subtle philosophizing, however precise and true it may be. If a movement captures the popular mind and can influence it sufficiently, it matters little what the Church teaches or what the academics debate. Ideas, over time, trickle down, but only in part and academic terminology in pop culture is more a result of pseudo-adoption and conversion than it is proof of public understanding of some theory.

During the period of the Enlightenment, the average European came to perceive any form of subordination to any authority as a species of injustice, and the old rhetoric about duty and hierarchy became distasteful in comparison to the security and respect promised by the new theory of rights. And so, as the goal of *justice* fell out of favor, Europe turned away from the old authorities. First, it turned from religious authorities, namely the Church (via the Reformation), and then from the traditional political authorities as a whole (via the Revolutions), and eventually turned away from the concept of objective law altogether, in favor of the ambulatory law of democratic regimes (political and economic Liberalism).

We could say that the history of the concept of *right* is a story of the revolt against objectivity, for duty is the objective expression of that which the right attempts to achieve from a subjective point of view.

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[22] *Summa*, II-II, q. 57, a. 1.

[23] *Summa*, II-II, q. 57, a. 2.

When duty fell out of favor and *rights* rose victorious, it should not have been surprising that this came hand-in-hand with a disdain for all external authorities that claimed to possess *objective truth*, anyone that dared make claims to universality, any philosophy that promoted awareness of the supra-individual order of things, religion most of all, since religion pursues and promotes the most rigorous objectivity.

The traditional world saw hierarchies everywhere, including within the good itself. There were higher and lower goods, and then there was the Absolute Good, which was God. This is the result of seeing all things in their proper relations. Such a view instills a sense of *intentional ordering* to reality. To nature, by God, and to society, by man, in imitation of God and in accordance with His precepts.

When hierarchy is denied, what follows is not a levelling (as egalitarian rhetoric would have us believe), but more often a reversal of the proper relationships between things. Thus, when it is pretended that the lower good is not subordinate to the higher, the two do not suddenly become equal, but instead the lower overthrows the higher, and the higher becomes the new subordinate.

It had always been said that man had duties, and it was from these duties that he drew his rights. Aquinas had considered right as a thing oriented outward, which was therefore *social* and *relational*, not something claimed for oneself. He would have agreed with Dávila's saying that a man "has no more right than that which he derives from another's duty."[24]

When Liberalism denied the correlation between right and duty, it ended by emphasizing right to the exclusion of duty. This led inevitably to the present situation, where no one can coherently speak of duties at all, for the only duty left is to respect another man's rights. The argument is circular, and it is a very small circle.

Undermining the concept of right.

We should notice now that the reversal in priority between right and duty is closely linked with the rejection of hierarchy in favor of equality. Liberalism's inherent egalitarianism renders it incapable of treating properly of the *right* as an expression of *justice*.

[24] Dávila, 2001 edition, aphorism 2979.

Rights are not a part of human nature, nor are they divinely gifted to man in a pre-packaged list, nor are they some kind of byproduct of 'all men being created equal' (whatever that might mean). Rights must always be derived from duties. If this is taken as a starting point, it becomes immediately clear that my particular range of duties is my own and no one else's. That is to say, one man's duties are not identical to another's. Responsibilities vary widely depending on one's station in life (family, vocation, etc.). This means that a valid concept of 'right' can never be universal and that the same set of rights cannot be equally distributed to all without distinction. Liberty, conformed to *justice* and adjusted to *duty,* is not *homogenous* with each and every man sharing the exact same prerogatives in the same way and to the same degree.

This is why we've gone to such great length to emphasize the problem of justice in relation to other beings, and within the context of community. Man always exists in communion with other men. The problem with individualistic Liberalism is that it always seems to start with Man as an abstract concept, treated as a completely self-sustaining and autonomous molecule. This Man (who only exists in the imagination) then becomes the subject of political philosophy, and we end up with a political philosophy that could only ever make sense in a *void*.

Now we can see why traditional civilization was not at all concerned about an egalitarian approach to individual liberty. If in the traditional context men varied in their *liberties* (in their possession of what we would call 'rights'), it was as a normal consequence of their varying duties, and it could not have been any other way.

A man with a family would naturally and logically have more rights, or rights of a different kind, than a bachelor, for the simple reason that the two men had very different obligations. Married people always had more rights than unmarried people due to the fact that they were responsibility for the care and education of children. Rights were not *possessed* by these people due to their status as generic *individuals*. These were simply the specific prerogatives resulting from the specific obligations these individuals had taken upon themselves. These rights varied not so much because of prejudice or ignorance, but for the plain and obvious reason that vocational obligations can be so diverse as to require widely varying degrees of latitude.

This is why the traditional wisdom abhors Liberal equality: it has nothing to do with tradition disdaining the dignity of the person, but stems from an insistence on realism—an actual taking into account of the demands of circumstance. When the connection between right and duty is destroyed, and rights become the *theoretical properties of a theoretically homogenous mass of individuals*, there will immediately arise the situation where some men do not have the proper rights to meet their obligations, while at the same time other persons have prerogatives that are not justified by their station. The former are then *underprivileged* and placed at a social disadvantage, being denied the power to fulfill their obligations, while the latter group (those who have prerogatives they do not need) are *overprivileged* and placed at a social advantage, since they exercise a disproportionate liberty not adjusted to their circumstances.

Such is the result of the modern abstracted theory of 'individual rights', and all of this plays out in a context where, legally, everyone is supposedly 'equal'. It makes for an excellent demonstration of how generic egalitarianism produces situational injustice and *exacerbates inequality*.

Returning again to the example of marriage and its so-called 'benefits', we can address the demand by same-sex couples to receive those same benefits by assuming the title of marriage for their partnerships. It is obvious from the point of view of natural fertility that any so-called 'benefits' bestowed on married couples are in place due to the tendency of such unions to produce children, and all of the obligations that follow. Thus, we can say that 'marriage benefits' were designed on the basis of centuries of experience to offset certain disadvantages faced by the procreative family, since they render a necessary service to the community by continuing the existence of mankind. Marital 'benefits' are not sentimental rewards offered to two adults 'because they love each other', although this is, in fact, what they would become if they were offered to same-sex couples. The legal measures in question do not so much elevate married couples above everyone else as keep them from falling below everyone else. When granted to homosexual couples, they would become gratuitous privileges allowed to relations of completely different order.

Nor is it always a question of unnecessary prerogatives. We have in mind here a related problem, that of divorce, which is promoted under the guise of *freedom* but amounts to a violation of the duties

owed to children, spouses, and to the community at large. Davila's warning was not vain condescension when he said: "It has become customary to proclaim rights in order to be able to violate duties."

Liberals seem to have little to contribute to political discourse except to complain of 'violated rights', rights for which they never provided any real concrete justification in the first place. Nietzsche himself may have been hitting on man's best interests when said "never to think of lowering our duties to the rank of duties for everybody; to be unwilling to renounce or to share our responsibilities; to count our prerogatives, and the exercise of them, among our *duties*." Davila again agreed, observing that the "tissues of society become cancerous when the duties of some are transformed into the rights of others."[25]

The refusal to see a right—a specific prerogative—as something separate from and subordinate to one's duty is a hallmark of the traditional mind; the inability to see anything but the prerogative, absolute and 'inalienable', is a hallmark of Liberalism.

Egoism and the loss of political purpose.

We've already spoken of Abelard's moral ego-centrism through which *the discovery of the self* almost became *the discovery of the self to the exclusion of all other realities*. We also acknowledged that the discovery of the self did not necessarily have to become an exclusively negative development, and that through men like Aquinas it was accepted and transfigured, becoming in Thomism what could be considered the apotheosis of Western philosophy. But through the Enlightenment, and with the downfall of Christendom, the Catholic anthropology was cast aside and with it the Thomist fusion of *self* and *other*. Ego-centrism was then released from all constraints. Finally, we acknowledged that this development undermined the relationship between right and duty, emphasizing rights above all else. Of this, Leo Strauss wrote:

> "Through the shift of emphasis from natural duties or obligations to natural rights, the individual, the ego, had become the center and origin of the moral world, since man—as

[25] Dávila, 2001 edition, aphorism 1190.

> distinguished from man's end—had become that center or origin."[26]

Here we come to the two fundamentals of the Liberal mentality: egoism (man as the center of reality), and humanism. And the natural consequence of these two ideas is a *total loss of teleology* (a purposeful orientation toward an end). This is a point that is not adequately acknowledged in many criticisms of modernist and liberal regimes.

When man becomes the origin of morality, the external moral imperative, which traditionally tethered his actions to a standard outside himself and even beyond the created order, giving him an external and objective aim—all of this evaporates into thin air. The contemporary human actor has freedom, yes, but it is like being liberated from one's natural atmosphere, like being flung into space, or into a desert. You are free! You have become the autonomous source and measure of the good, and you may go whatever direction you like—but you find yourself in empty space, in a desolate vacuum. You can go anywhere, but there is nowhere to go. What damnable freedom, and who would want it?

Theoretical liberty permits actual tyranny.

Universal suffrage (the extension of the right to vote to all classes) is a very educational subject of study because it illustrates so well the Liberal sleight-of-hand.

By holding out to the people a new *privilege*—the right to vote—it becomes possible, in the background and without anyone noticing, to put in place a radical new *responsibility*, one that no peasant population would have so readily accepted...*the duty to wage war*. This was originally called *conscription,* but today it is called *the draft*.

To quote Hippolyte Taine:

> As war has followed war, the burden of conscription has grown heavier. Like a slow contagion it has spread from State to State until now the whole of continental Europe is in its grip. There it holds court along with the friend of its youth, its twin brother, that comes always just before or after it—with universal

[26] Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (University of Chicago, 1953), p. 248.

> suffrage; both of them brought to birth at about the same time, the one bringing in its train, more or less openly and completely, the other, both of them the blind and terrible guides or masters of the future, the one placing in the hands of every adult person a voting paper, the other putting on his back a soldier's knapsack. The promise which they hold for the twentieth century of slaughter and bankruptcy, the exacerbation of hatred and suspicion between nations, the wastage of the work of men's hands, the perversion to base uses of the beneficent discoveries of science, the return to the low and debased shapes of primitive societies on the warpath, the retrograde movement towards a barbarous and instinctual egotism, towards the feelings, manners and morals of ancient cities and savage tribes—all this we know too well![27]

In traditional civilization, the 'privileges' of the nobility were linked to the fact that war was their responsibility: they ruled because they fought, and they fought because they ruled. With the rise of democracy, the people were told that they too could rule like the nobility of old. And so flattered were they at the idea of participating in government that they hardly noticed the cost.

Men of today, insofar as they are sufficiently *patriotic,* go to war when their government calls them, kill whom it calls them to kill, and die in whatever country happens to have warranted their 'deployment'. But if we are to judge by the words and actions of the common voter in today's democracy, we would have to say that he is becoming resentful. Perhaps he is beginning to see how he was swindled, perceiving that the promise of 'self-government' is yet unfulfilled. He votes, but he still feels powerless. He is assured that he calls the shots, but at every turn he feels commanded by *them*. *They* tell him what to do, *they* demand his taxes, *they* start wars, *they* make laws he cannot understand or condone.

It is becoming blatantly clear to the voter that the ballot sheet he is allowed to sign every four years was perhaps not worth the knapsack on his back. He wonders if perhaps the state, in permitting him to vote, came out far better in the deal. He is skeptical that, in the end, his vote even matters. He does not *feel* very empowered, but he certainly feels the bullet in his belly.

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[27] Hippolyte Taine, *The Origins of Contemporary France*.

Universal suffrage was a devil's bargain and has always signaled the establishment of conscription. In the days of kingship, it is true that men could not vote, but neither could they be pressed into any kind of extensive military service. They could be pressed into something resembling a militia, for campaigns lasting thirty days at a time, but this is of an entirely different order than today, when men can be drawn up via lottery, by the millions, from land masses the size of the United States, for years at a time, to fight on the far side of the globe.

I say to a peasant: You may have a hand in governing your fellows and yourself, like the aristocrat, but you must therefore also fight, like the aristocrat. The offer is accepted, but before long, the deception becomes clear. The new peasant-noble is allowed to fight and to die, like the aristocrat of old—but he dies wondering whether or not he ever really got to govern himself, much less anyone else. He fulfilled his end of the bargain, giving himself up to Power: did power ever give any of itself up to him?

All the talk of rights and shared power is rhetoric. The truth is that it is impossible to bestow a right. Only *duties* can be bestowed on a man, and anyone pretending to offer you a right is probably smuggling a duty in the fine print. In the case of modern regimes, it was conscription, an institution which Jefferson called 'the last of all oppressions'.[28] But this is how it has always gone, for Liberalism succeeds by flattery.

Three forms of Liberalism.

We've already hinted that Liberalism universalizes itself, encroaching on all areas of life and thought. Thus, it is alarmingly naïve to entertain a view of Liberalism that recognizes it *only* as a limited set of *political* ideas. The Liberal movement invaded political philosophy, to be sure, but it reached both above and below that level, disturbing the mind of man not only in the voting booth, but also in the marketplace, at work, and in the church pew. With its withering touch, this new life outlook dictated not only how he would earn his daily bread, but even how he would relate to the sacred.

As Pope Paul VI was to say, "at the very root of philosophical liberalism is an erroneous affirmation of the autonomy of the

[28] Thomas Jefferson's phrase when speaking of conscription.

individual in his activity, his motivation and the exercise of his liberty,"[29] which always carries with it, usually unconsciously, an unprecedented optimism about the mental aptitudes of the individual.

If we pause and survey the last several centuries, do we not find movements within the religious, economic, and political spheres that clearly manifest the same mentality?

Tocqueville thought he saw correspondences between the most significant personalities of the preceding period: "Who cannot see that Luther, Descartes, and Voltaire used the same method and that they differed from each other only in the greater and lesser use they claimed to make of it?"[30]

This "shared method" is Liberalism, and it is evident even in the broad social transformations that took place. We will mention three of these transformations specifically: *Protestantism*, *Capitalism*, and, although we've driven it home already, the *Enlightenment*.

The Reformation was nothing more than the *liberalization of religion*, destroying hierarchy, insisting on equality, showing a naïve optimism about human aptitudes, transferring to the judgment of the individual the weightiest of all tasks—the interpretation of both Scripture and Tradition. In the economic sphere, it is obviously Capitalism that represents an unrestrained embrace of individualism and liberty through the doctrines of sanctioned self-interest and 'free markets'. And we have just finished describing precepts which, through the Enlightenment, expressed the same symptoms in the political realm: free speech, absolute rights, and secularism.

Reformation: or religious Liberalism.

That Liberalism is anti-authoritarian and individualistic we take as obvious. If we understand it to be also an error of *reductio ad absurdum*, severing branch from vine, then it does not take extensive argument to show that Luther's three *solas* unquestionably fit the bill. How else can we interpret *sola fide* ("faith alone"), *sola scriptura* ("scripture alone"), and *sola gratia* ("grace alone") than as partial selections of a pre-existent whole? The

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[29] Pope Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 35.

[30] Tocqueville, op. cit., p. 495.

atomized nature of these doctrines is itself implicit in the term, *sola*. They are the tenets of *nothing-but-ness*. A partial nihilism, but a nihilism all the same. Add to this doctrinal oversimplification the principle of private interpretation, and the concept of a unifying authority evaporates altogether, taking all hopes of traditional unity along with it.

Here we may benefit from a small work by Fr. Felix Sarda y Salvany, published in 1886 under the title *El Liberalismo es Pecado*, or "Liberalism is a Sin." This thin volume meticulously refutes the errors associated with religious Liberalism, and it is worth noting that he has in mind not only the Reformation but also the Catholic Church, which was being invaded by the same mentality. Many were seeking to 'reconcile' the Church with the modern world, a reconciliation that could not occur without the essence of the former being extinguished:

> Liberalism is the dogmatic affirmation of the absolute independence of the individual and of the social reason. Catholicity is the dogma of absolute subjection of the individual and of the social order to the revealed law of God. One doctrine is the exact antithesis of the other.[31]

As for the book itself, in case the bluntness of its title and the relative obscurity of its author give pause to the cautious reader, making him suspicious that these are the ramblings of a radical, unsupported by the Catholic Church itself, we should mention that it was initially intercepted by a Bishop of Liberal persuasion on its way to publication. This bishop submitted it to the Sacred Congregation of the Index, in hopes that the work would be put under ban. The Sacred Congregation reviewed the submission and responded on January 10, 1887 as follows:

> ...not only is nothing found contrary to sound doctrine, but its author, D. Felix Sarda, merits great praise for his exposition and defense of the sound doctrine therein set forth with solidity, order and lucidity, and without personal offense to anyone.

Thus reassured that the book is truly *Catholic*, we may cite from its pages and hear what case it brings against Luther's movement:

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[31] *Liberalism is a Sin*, ch. 6.

> Rejecting the principle of authority in religion, [Protestantism] has neither criterion nor definition of faith. On the principle that every individual or sect may interpret the deposit of Revelation according to the dictates of private judgment, it gives birth to endless differences and contradictions. Impelled by the law of its own impotence, through lack of any decisive voice of authority in matters of faith, it is forced to recognize as valid and orthodox any belief that springs from the exercise of private judgment. Therefore does it finally arrive, by force of its own premises, at the conclusion that one creed is as good as another; it then seeks to shelter its inconsistency under the false plea of liberty of conscience. Belief is not imposed by a legitimately and divinely constituted authority, but springs directly and freely from the unrestricted exercise of the individual's reason or caprice upon the subject matter of Revelation. The individual or sect interprets as it pleases—rejecting or accepting what it chooses. This is popularly called liberty of conscience. Accepting this principle, Infidelity, on the same plea, rejects all Revelation, and Protestantism, which handed over the premise, is powerless to protest against the conclusion; for it is clear that one who, under the plea of rational liberty, has the right to repudiate any part of Revelation that may displease him, cannot logically quarrel with one who, on the same ground, repudiates the whole. If one creed is as good as another, on the plea of rational liberty, on the same plea, no creed is as good as any. Taking the field with this fatal weapon of Rationalism, Infidelity has stormed and taken the very citadel of Protestantism, helpless against the foe of its own making.[32]

If we were to characterize the gist of this reasoning, it is that a process which begins in disintegration must proceed toward disorder and terminate in death. Neither can this argument be called a 'slippery slope', for he was not conjecturing wildly about what *might happen*, but was observing what *already had*. He was merely connecting dots.

> Such is the mainspring of the heresy constantly dinned into our ears, flooding our current literature and our press. It is against this that we have to be perpetually vigilant, the more so because it insidiously attacks us on the grounds of *a false charity and in the name of a false liberty*...

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[32] *Liberalism is a Sin*, ch. 2.

> The principle ramifies in many directions, striking root into our domestic, civil, and political life, whose vigor and health depend upon the nourishing and sustaining power of religion. For religion is the bond which unites us to God, the Source and End of all good; and Infidelity, whether virtual, as in Protestantism, or explicit, as in Agnosticism, severs the bond which binds men to God and *seeks to build human society on the foundations of man's absolute independence.*[33]

Nothing else need be said at this point regarding Liberalism in its specifically religious manifestation, because another section we have addressed the question of religion more comprehensively.

Enlightenment: or political Liberalism.

> *"...these followers of liberalism deny the existence of any divine authority to which obedience is due, and proclaim that every man is the law to himself; from which arises that ethical system which they style independent morality, and which, under the guise of liberty, exonerates man from any obedience to the commands of God, and substitutes a boundless license. The end of all this it is not difficult to foresee, especially when society is in question. For, when once man is firmly persuaded that he is subject to no one, it follows that the efficient cause of the unity of civil society is not to be sought in any principle external to man, or superior to him, but simply in the free will of individuals; that the authority in the State comes from the people only; and that, just as every man's individual reason is his only rule of life, so the collective reason of the community should be the supreme guide in the management of all public affairs. Hence the doctrine of the supremacy of the greater number, and that all right and all duty reside in the majority."*
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> *~ Pope Leo XIII*[34]

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[33] Ibid., emphasis mine.

[34] *Libertas*, 15.

In much the same way that Luther could be considered the father of the Reformation, John Locke (1632-1704) has been considered the father of political Liberalism. He was the most influential thinker to come from the Enlightenment, and was the philosopher of choice for revolutionaries such as the American Founding Fathers.

For our purposes here we will adopt Christopher Ferrara's summary, which concisely presents Locke's political legacy:[35]

> A hypothetical "social compact" or contract as the foundation of the State.
>
> The origin of political sovereignty in the "consent" of the governed (invariably presumed to have been given by those who happen to be wielding power).
>
> "Government by the people" according to the "sovereignty of the people," meaning strict majority rule on all questions, including the most profound moral ones.
>
> Church-State separation and the non-"interference" of religion in politics.
>
> The confinement of religion, above all the revealed truths of Christianity, to the realm of "private" opinions and practices one is free to adopt (or to denounce) if it pleases him, but which are to have no controlling effect on law or public policy.
>
> The unlimited pursuit of gain, including the freedom to buy, sell and advertise anything whatsoever the majority deems permissible by law.
>
> Total liberty of thought and action, both private and public, within the limits of a merely external "public peace" essentially reduced to the protection of persons and property from invasion by others—in sum, a "free-market society."
>
> The dissolubility of marriage, and thus the family, as a mere civil contract founded on a revocable consent.

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[35] Christopher A. Ferrara, *Liberty, the god that failed: policing the sacred and constructing the myths of the secular state from Locke to Obama*. Angelico Press, Tacoma, 2012. p. 15.

These principles found their most absolute expression in the French Revolution. The American Revolution, however, suffices as another example, and the Declaration of Independence acts as a neat summary of Locke's ideas. This should come as no surprise, since the Declaration was penned by Jefferson, an intellectual so enamored with Locke that he added his bust to a special canvas alongside Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. These, he wrote, were "the three greatest men that have ever lived, without any exception…having laid the foundation of those superstructures which have been raised."[36]

Capitalism: or economic Liberalism.

> *"The conviction that man is self-sufficient and can successfully eliminate the evil present in history by his own action alone has led him to confuse happiness and salvation with immanent forms of material prosperity and social action. Then, the conviction that the economy must be autonomous, that it must be shielded from "influences" of a moral character, has led man to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive way. In the long term, these convictions have led to economic, social and political systems that trample upon personal and social freedom, and are therefore unable to deliver the justice that they promise."*
>
> *~ Pope Benedict XVI*[37]

That Capitalism is the *liberalization of economic life* should be painfully obvious, even though the American conservatives who today espouse it have no idea of the fact. To illustrate the point to such historically ignorant individuals, then, we might refer to Milton Friedman, economic advisor to Ronald Reagan and internationally known proponent of laissez-faire economic policy. In his 1962 book titled *Capitalism and Freedom,* he wrote that "the intellectual movement that went under the name of Liberalism emphasized freedom as the ultimate goal and the individual as the ultimate entity in the society." This movement "supported laissez-faire at home as a means of reducing the role of the state in economic affairs

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[36] Letter to John Trumbull, Thomas Jefferson: Writings, 939.

[37] *Caritas in Veritate,* 34.

and thereby enlarging the role of the individual." *Friedman thus considered himself a thoroughgoing Liberal*, as much as this might dismay his contemporary disciples who think that 'liberalism' is merely a synonym for progressive politics. The reason for this dismay is simply that Friedman was consistent, and had an understanding of history and philosophy; our contemporary conservatives do not.

At this point I do not intend to examine the policies or problems associated with Capitalism. That will be addressed when we lay out Catholic Social Teachings as an adaptation of traditional doctrine to the modern context. Here and now, we only intended to show that Liberalism acted as the mother of Capitalism, since this relationship tends to be veiled, especially in the United States, due to our arbitrary use of political terminology.

Having shown this connection, we are able to understand the phrasing used in many Catholic encyclicals and documents which condemn Capitalism by calling it Liberalism. For example, when Pope Pius XI applauds "boldly breaking through the confines imposed by Liberalism,"[38] and John XXIII condemns "unrestricted competition in the Liberal sense,"[39] they are speaking with a unified voice of the evils of Capitalism,[40] but this is completely ignored by many contemporary readers who refuse to acknowledge that contemporary party politics do not retroactively determine the meaning of words in historical documents.

Oswald Spengler had seen the connection between the *money Liberalism* of our capitalists and the more *progressive moral Liberalism* of their enemies, saying that Liberalism consists in "freedom of the intellect for every kind of criticism, freedom of money for every kind of business."[41]

Capitalism is artificially imposed.

Economic liberalism promises to promote an environment of 'equal opportunity' and free trade. The problem is that even if we began in a context of *real equality of opportunity*, for example with a blank

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[38] *Quadragesimo Anno*, 25.

[39] *Mater et Magistra*, 23.

[40] See also: *Sollicitudo rei Socialis*, 20, 21, and 41.

[41] Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West: Perspectives on World History*, p. 403-404.

slate, each man having a certain allotment of resources, and then allowed competition to have its way, *freely*, then this context of relative equality would immediately cease to exist. As soon as one business fails and another absorbs a portion of that market, the latter grows and is as a matter of course more advantageously positioned than anyone else who must start from zero. This process of concentration whereby the successful swallow up the rest, first due to aptitude and then due to power pure and simple, is the major blind spot of free market ideology. The truth is that a market that is left to itself will quickly become captive. Thus, ironically, the only way to maintain a market of relative freedom and to allow competition to actually function in a meaningful way, it is necessary to impose strict limits on the amount of control one successful business can exercise on the market.

It is generally admitted that monopolies destroy competition and market function, but it is ignored that capitalist ideology paves the way for concentration of economic power.

A functional market is always a balance between principled regulation and profitable, competitive activity. Too much of the former leads to socialism and too much of the latter leads to capitalism. Neither are truly *free* markets.

A market that is truly *free*—in which as many businesses as possible can participate and that permits supply and demand to function meaningfully—is always going to survive as a *manipulated* and even and *enforced* economy of limits and meaningful intervention. This is how it has always been. Contrary to what the capitalists would have us believe, we find in history it is not 'the survival of the fittest' but a highly developed system of customs and obligations that characterize the *spontaneous, natural, and human state of things*. Man lives in community with other men, and communities are reciprocal and cooperative or else they are nothing.

People have to be propagandized, pressured and berated in order to get them to act according to capitalist ideology, telling him against his better judgement that he ought to behave according to pure self-interest and that anything else is an affront to human freedom.

The worst we can say about modern men is that they've listened, and many have *believed*.

Liberalism and cowardice.

> *"A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, each government, each political party and of course in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite, causing an impression of loss of courage by the entire society. Of course there are many courageous individuals but they have no determining influence on public life…Should one point out that from ancient times decline in courage has been considered the beginning of the end?"*
>
> *~ Aleksander Solzhenitsyn*[42]

There is an old parable regarding some servants who, being trusted by their master with varying quantities of money, each acted in a different fashion. Two of the three invested it, and then surrendered the profit to their master. The third man, however, buried his portion, and returned precisely the amount that he was given. When he does this, his master condemns him as a coward, and has him thrown out into the darkness. From this parable we can assume two things, one about the master, and the other about the servant. About the master, we can say that he obviously prefers *the errors of the bold* to the *cowardly inaction* of the timid.

This is the same lesson that we take from Revelation 3:15, when it is said: "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I will spit you out of my mouth!"

These passages give rise to the idea of the courageous sin, which is a sin, but one that was preferable to the evil of doing nothing with one's freedom.

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[42] Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, Harvard Commencement Address delivered on June 8, 1978.

As for the servant who is cast out, we can assume that his fear inhibited him, and that he was ruled by this fear, and so he did nothing with the time he was given. He was a non-entity. He did not sin, in a positive sense, and that is the defense offered always by those who do nothing. And this explains why he could not be excused.

The parable is one about loyalty, yes, but also, and more important for us here, it is about courage, and it seems to us that it is a perfect demonstration of the cowardice of modern political ideology.

As Carl Schmitt said in his *Political Theology*:

> The essence of Liberalism is negotiation, a cautious half measure, in the hope that the definitive dispute, the decisive bloody battle, can be transformed into a parliamentary debate and permit the decision to be suspended forever in an everlasting discussion.

In this he identified the paradox of Liberalism: it is jealous and therefore aggressive, but it is cowardly and therefore timid in its aggression.

Liberalism fosters the behavior of Hitler in C.S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, who spends his eternity building and re-building his cottage further and further away from the community of the damned. Each time he completes construction, he discovers that he has not gotten far enough away from the other individualists.

Fear is also paralyzing, particularly in the mental sphere. This is perhaps why general ignorance has increased exponentially under the rule of Liberalism, despite whatever scientific achievements have also occurred. As Frank Herbert, the master of science fiction, once put it: "fear is the mind-killer." And this is the precise truth, because a person acting in fear loses his capacity for judgment precisely insofar as he is affected by his fear. In fear, if he does anything at all, he does things that, in a peaceful frame of mind, he'd have found ridiculous. This is why we would expect that, if fear were to become a generalized condition in a civilization, knowledge itself would begin to deteriorate and psychotic behavior would become *normal*.

Knowledge has a character of command. If something is true, and if we know it is true, we must act in accordance with it. Men across all

various creeds agree at least on that, and this is why the immoralist does not claim the right to ignore morality, but rather denies its existence. No one acknowledges a truth and at the same time denies the obligation—the duty—it imposes. And so again, in ages of fear, truth, because of its imperious character, is the most despised of things.

It is like small child who chooses not to ask his mother a question because he knows he isn't going to like the answer. The modern man is just such a childish figure—the questions every man in history was ready to ask, and sought with great effort, are set aside as 'impossible to know' or invalid from the start. He wants nothing to do with them.

Cowardice says: "Only this—and only if I must." This is the fundamental cowardice of Protestantism. So horrified is the Protestant of *courageous error* that they bury their inheritance and insist on *sola* this and *sola* that. Ironically, however, this doctrinal timidness has given rise to the most extreme errors of specific interpretation.

When Spengler famously wrote that 'optimism is cowardice', he was following the same train of thought. He was not so much condemning a 'positive attitude' as he was condemning a very specific kind of positive attitude, the one adopted in order to avoid the severe realities of life, because it is only through these realities that courage and honor can be teased out of existence:

> We are born into this time and must bravely follow the path to the destined end. There is no other way. Our duty is to hold on to the lost position, without hope, without rescue, like that Roman soldier whose bones were found in front of a door in Pompeii, who, during the eruption of Vesuvius, died at his post because they forgot to relieve him. That is greatness. That is what it means to be a thoroughbred. The honorable end is the one thing that cannot be taken from a man.[43]

He was summarizing the effects of Liberalism, with its contradictory attempt to combine perpetual strife with promises of Progress and Happiness. Through this new myth, called Competition, it Liberalism taught that by waging a perpetual war with our neighbor for the means of self-indulgence, Happiness will be forthcoming,

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[43] Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics* (Arktos, 2015), p. 77.

and that the longer we wage this war, the more wealth we will have and the happier we'll become.

We could proceed through a number of examples, familiar to all, to illustrate this omnipresent and enslaving fear which creates animosity and madness: Think of the man who stockpiles weaponry in his basement, and rages about his *rights*, and who imagines the day when he will have to do battle with his government—which, as likely as not, will actually be one of his neighbors—when they come to steal these *rights* from him. Think of the transexual who invents a long list of new pronouns and rages at the world for not permitting him to restructure language on the fly. This behavior is complex, obviously, but in some sense it is certainly an expression of paranoia, an extreme and enslaving condition of fear. But it is also inertia. *Without courage nothing happens*...that is why God hates it. God wishes to see potential realized, the good achieved. God creates, and God does not suffer the non-entity who excuses himself from reality.

The fearful man might be guilty of terrible errors, or he might be innocent, but he'll be innocent in the way that a rabbit is innocent. Innocent because he is harmless. Innocent because too spiritually impotent to do anything at all either for God or for Satan. A culture led by such men withers into nothing. Nietzsche's unique definition of Liberalism is then proven accurate:

"The honourable term for mediocre is, of course, the word 'Liberal'."[44]

Reductionism.

> *"The present danger does not really lie in the loss of universality on the part of the scientist, but rather on his pretense and claim of totality...What we have to deplore therefore is not so much the fact that scientists are specializing, but rather the fact that specialists are generalizing. The true nihilism of today is reductionism...Contemporary nihilism no longer brandishes the word nothingness; today nihilism is camouflaged as nothing-but-ness. Human phenomena are thus turned into mere epiphenomena."*

[44] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power,* paragraph 864.

~ Viktor Frankl[45]

Another term for Liberalism nihilism, which is really nothing but fear expressed in the realms of knowledge and values, is *reductionism*. Reductionism is a fearful minimalism, insisting that knowledge be drastically simplified. This is typically accomplished by way of *unjustifiable generalities*.

To demonstrate how far-reaching this reductionism has been, we will examine the contributions made to the decay of knowledge by Rene Descartes, Isaac Newton, Martin Luther, Adam Smith, John Locke, Charles Darwin, and Sigmund Freud. These figures are chosen for the diversity of the fields they represent. If some of this recapitulates what has been said above, the reader is asked to excuse the repetition as a matter of deliberate emphasis.

Rene Descartes (Philosophy): Descartes put a ceiling on man's knowledge which limited 'truth' to rational concepts. This rejected the traditional conception of the self and of our ability to know God through the supra-rational Intellect, "the eye of the heart", which sees things beyond "the eye of the mind". Thus, rooting the certainty of our existence in operations of the discursive faculty, he also sought to enclose the Divine on this plane. Everything becomes rational, and therefore impoverished.

Isaac Newton (Physics): Joining with Descartes, Newton reduced the sciences of physics to mathematics and therefore to a deterministic mechanism:

> "According to the mechanical philosophy and its theory of 'atomism,' the operations of material beings are owing entirely to movements of units of matter (atoms) governed by physical laws rather than the constitutive forms of the Aristotelian-Thomistic system lying beyond the matter of which things are composed."[46]

This rejected any *metaphysical* considerations in regard to matter, and effectively severed this science from transcendence.

Martin Luther (Religion): We have already discussed Luther's contribution to the *reductionism* of the modern era. Suffice it to

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[45] Cited in E.F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, pp. 5-6.

[46] Christopher Ferrara, *Liberty: The God that Failed*, p. 40.

repeat here that he did not reform—he abridged to an extreme. He took a few specific points of traditional doctrine, such as the teachings about grace, faith, and scripture, and elevated them to absolutes without context or support. In this way he simplified all theology into the "nothing-but-ness" of the three solas: *sola scripture, sola fida, sola gratia.*

Adam Smith (Economics): The well-known treatise *Wealth of Nations* contained not a single new idea. Great minds from Aristotle to St. Augustine to St. Thomas Aquinas had spent the last two-thousand years developing the science which they called 'Political Economy'. When Smith came on the scene, his predecessors had already taken into consideration the totality of economic action and had situated it hierarchically within all other sciences, superior and inferior. Within economics itself they had discerned four categories or *stages*: production, exchange, distribution, and consumption. All Smith did was destroy this comprehensive edifice by dropping the last two categories (distribution and consumption), and by rejecting any moral or metaphysical considerations. He made the same error as Newton, reducing a sacred science to a profane one, and in the process destabilizing it and degrading it, under the pretense that it could be considered a *mechanical* and *mathematical* science, and would thenceforth become simply *economics*.

Charles Darwin (Biology): It was said by C.S. Lewis that "evolution is as old as Epictetus", and he was right. Just as the Greeks knew the world was not flat,[47] they also conceived of the idea that life originated in the sea, in some primordial sludge, and then migrated onto land and eventually became man. What Darwin did, which the Greeks refused to do, was take this out of a metaphysical context and attempt to mechanize it according to purely materialistic laws. Darwin eliminated the transcendent from biology, as Newton had eliminated it from physics. Man, then, is a result of this *evolutive* mechanism, and all of his complexity and subtlety can therefore be accounted for by this mechanism, given enough time.

Sigmund Freud (Psychology): Working from the combined reductions of Descartes, Newton, and Darwin, Freud formulated his ideas, which were perhaps the most reductionistic to date. In the work of Freud, the mind, already a shell of its former self, is further reduced to a highly unstable yet entirely predetermined product of

[47] They observed the spherical shadow of the earth on the moon during eclipses.

its environment. A mechanical monstrosity. All human passions and beliefs are the result of subterranean influences of the unconscious, which only occasionally break the surface of consciousness and present themselves for analysis. In Freud, we see that the Cartesian imprisonment of the mind eventually—and necessarily—gave way to man becoming a prisoner of instinct and animal 'drives'.

John Locke (Politics): The reader may not be familiar with Locke by name, but everyone in America is intimately familiar with his political theory. He was one of the famous and influential liberals of the Enlightenment. He is responsible for the radically reductionistic political doctrines on which liberal democracies like America now operate. Like all the previous characters in this list, his claim to fame is the severing of transcendence from his particular field. Locke's primary legacy in this respect is the 'separation of church and state', which today both Christians and pagans embrace as a wonderful novelty, although they justify it in different ways. He completed this reduction by placing all authority in 'the people', the government deriving its sovereignty from the bottom up. This is the opposite of the traditional teaching, traced out by Paul, showing that political leaders must acknowledge and remain attached to God, because their authority derives not from below but *from the top down*. But God was already dead. Based on Locke's liberal principles, and with God unmentioned in the American Constitution, whatever the people came to desire would be translated into law. This holds true even if the people wish to abolish fundamental realities like sex, and even if they wish to reinstate ancient horrors such as child sacrifice.

> ***Univocity fetish and social contract theory.***
>
> *"Due to their fetish of univocity, the men of the Enlightenment were largely unable to comprehend the idea of the common good. The atoms of Democritus and Newton's particles of light made philosophes think they could ground the common good in private right.*
>
> *"Since all people discover themselves within a society, and discover within themselves an impulse towards sociability, it was necessary to come up with some other justification for the existence of community, even if the common good was not acceptable as an explanation. This is the origin of social contract theories."*

~ Coëmgenus[48]

One last hallmark of Enlightenment thought needs to be addressed, which is its obstinate, unrelenting insistence on *errors of univocity*—which is to say, a refusal to acknowledge subtleties in philosophical terminology and to treat everything *perspicuous*. This is especially damaging when it comes to the traditional distinction between *individual* or *private good* and the *common good*.

For the Liberal philosophers, the starting point was the individual. The individual was also the end point. It was assumed that if there was such a thing as *the good*, then it was certainly an *individual good*, and that the traditional concept of the *common good,* if allowed at all, could be nothing other than the sum total of individual goods. What was in fact a difference *in kind* was re-framed as a question of simple arithmetic.

Thus, even when Enlightenment thinkers acknowledge the duty of the State to seek serve the common good, they interpret this to mean that the State ought to limit itself to the protection of individual rights, since the common good can mean this and nothing more. We notice here again the inability to identify hierarchies of any kind, which ends each and every time by subordinating the higher to the lower.

This univocity error boils down to the inability (or refusal) to make distinctions. Look through the *Summa* of St. Thomas, or any work of Aristotle's. On almost every question these thinkers were concerned first and foremost with making the proper distinctions between orders and meanings for each term, allowing for a diversity of interpretations that nonetheless combine to form more or less coherent philosophies. It is difficult to imagine St. Thomas Aquinas starting the *Summa* with 'we hold these truths to be self-evident', and if he had, he could have finished it in a few pages.

In the traditional conception, the common good is a good *of a higher order*, complementing the individual good but at the very same time superior to it as *form* is superior to *matter* in Greek hylomorphism. They touch, but hierarchically. What is important to note is that one cannot approach the superior by attending only to the inferior. One

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[48] Coëmgenus, *The Josiahs,* "Theses and Responses on Antiamericanism", http://thejosias.com/2014/11/01/theses-and-responses-on-antiamericanism/.

cannot pretend to seek the common good if one only seeks individual goods.

Thus, a State which does nothing but protect individual rights could at the same time be undermining the common good by limiting itself to an inferior, even if necessary, function.

State action which does not go beyond respect for individual rights does not approach the common good, which is supra-individual. That is not to imply that the common good must be sought *at the expense of* the individual good. The two only become antagonistic when their proper balance or relationship is disrupted. Our sections on the social teachings of the Catholic Church will comment in more detail on the balance. Here we only wish to point out that the common good is one of many fundamental philosophical concepts rendered incomprehensible through the univocity of the Liberals. They try to hold things together by promoting the pseudo-doctrine of the 'social contract', but this contract is purely imaginary.

Strife as the basis of civilization.

St. Augustine wrote that 'all things desire peace,' and if the Christian tradition is indeed correct in identifying this yearning as one of man's most noble desires, then it is true that Liberalism has done great violence to man by subverting it and rendering it futile. Liberalism and its forms, namely capitalism, idealize instead the values of competition, which is to say *strife*, and ours is in fact the first civilization to attempt to base itself on strife.

It had always been said that the end of activity, even war, was peace; today peace is an evil. Peace is not productive. While Augustine and Aquinas taught that we must seek not only the absence of war but the harmony of wills, Liberalism teaches that 'if you desire peace, prepare for war'—thus, war is the engine of peace, and whatever peace, progress, or happiness exists, is credited to the perpetual interplay of various forms of combat.

Human life, for example, is said to be the biproduct of competitive forces, the 'survival of the fittest', a doctrine which finds its economic expression in the Liberal ideas of capitalism and *laissez-faire* market ideology. Here not only material prosperity but even man himself is the outcome of the great battle for survival, whether that battle be for genetic superiority or natural resources.

We can follow this line of thinking through politics, where we see that the foundation of Liberal regimes (for example the United States) is conceived as a 'balance of competing powers', each of which, it is assumed, would seek to aggrandize itself if given the opportunity. This balance could more properly be termed a *battle* between opposing factions without shared identity or motive.

These powers are designed in such a way that they are always and everywhere trying to check each other's progress. This aspect of political Liberalism has fused itself ever so naturally with economic life in such a way that the former is now steered by almost entirely by the interests of the latter.

As far as the people are concerned (always in a decreasing degree), this process is exemplified by the two great parties endlessly vying for control over the machinery of the state.

Peace, then, is not an ideal—it is a byproduct of chaos. Biproducts, however, are decreased with efficiency, and peace is becoming scarcer every day as the process becomes more refined. If competition is good, then the system which maximizes 'controlled discord' will be the best.

The outcome of this confused situation is, first, a perpetually agitated human population which, at the same time, exhibits a strange timidity toward conflict. It is as if the general atmosphere of subdued opposition instills a fear of open aggression. Thus, true restfulness never arrives, and the true fight never begins. In this state of indirect warfare everyone loses, and even the winners are degraded. It is the Nietzschean "struggle for supremacy amidst conditions that are worth nothing: this civilization of great cities, newspapers, fever, uselessness."[49]

The Liberal and the Traditionalist.

It is sometimes helpful, when discussing democracy, to use monarchy as a *counterpoint*, on the condition that this is done *didactically,* in order to help explain our ideas, and not with superficial intention, as if we were arguing for the implementation of a monarchical form of government here and now. Here and

[49] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 748.

elsewhere in this manual we will adopt the term *traditionalist* with a similar aim, and with similar reservations.

That is to say, if we take up this 'label' for ourselves, if we call ourselves *traditionalists,* it is for the sake of clarifying our position and because it makes for an excellent contrast to the modern mentality, since until this point we've given the impression *that everyone is a Liberal*.

It is true, of course: *nearly everyone today is a Liberal*. Yet there have been characters who rejected the modern consensus. Some of the more notable figures in this group are: Nicolás Gómez Dávila, whom we have just quoted. Also Bertrand de Jouvenel, Joseph de Maistre, Julius Evola, Rene Guénon, Ivan Illich, and various popes of the Catholic Church. To describe these types, I will use the term *Traditionalist*.

All such labels are admittedly imprecise and have numerous drawbacks. First and foremost, the near universal incomprehension regarding the true nature of tradition in the modern world. This would lead our readers to imagine that the *traditionalist* argues for a rigid set of forms long-dead, wishing to reincarnate these dead forms and force them upon the living. We have already dealt with this confusion, but it cannot be eliminated.

Second, there is baggage attached to the term due to its being used in a relative sense by various groups. For example, within the Catholic Church itself there are 'traditionalist Catholics' who pit themselves against the modernist Catholics, but this does not necessarily make them our allies since their understanding of the concept of tradition usually only extends as far as certain liturgical forms. Beyond this secondary context, there are economic traditionalists, legal traditionalists, and so on. Anyone who hearkens back to a previous value, or previous iterations of a current value, as opposed to the latest and greatest, is liable to adopt for themselves the title of 'traditionalist' even though they might be defending some idea that is only a few decades old. Thus, we find many traditionalists who are merely upholding earlier versions of modernist doctrine.

Having considered these difficulties, we adopt the label anyway, not because it is perfect but because it provides us with a device of contrast. It allows us to make distinctions, and we will pause to

outline many of the distinguishing characteristics that separate the *traditionalist* from the *Liberal* in the table below.

The Liberal	The Traditionalist
Equality	Hierarchy
Right	Duty
Patriotism	Fides
Uniformity	Unity
Democracy	Monarchy and aristocracy
Accumulation	Subsistence
Competition	Cooperation
Economic sex	Vernacular gender
Corporation	Guild
Anonymity	Personality
Revolution	Rebellion
Conflict	Order, peace
Legalism	Custom, tradition
Popular sovereignty	Divine sovereignty
Materialism, vague "spirituality"	Religious life
Worship of scientists, doctors	Worship of saints
Subjectivity	Objectivity
Majority opinion	Natural law
Agitation	Contemplation
Clinging to youth	Veneration for old age
Speed	Procrastination
Fear of mortality	Awareness of immortality
Education	Wisdom
Technical know-how	Art
Escapism	Confrontation
Novelty, "originality"	Beauty, truth
Worship of health, fitness	Indifference to fitness
Determinism	Free will
Security, safety	Adventure

Nationalism, internationalism	Empire, Supranationalism
The soldier, militarism	The knight, samurai, warrior
Industrial production	Craftsmanship
Individualism and collectivism	Personalism
The apartment, skyscraper, hotel	The castle, farm, hut
Anthropocentrism	Theocentrism
Homogeneity and the masses	Mosaic of families and villages
Monotony	Harmony
Cowardice, timidity	Courage
Centralism	Federalism
Horizontal order	Vertical order
Contractual society	Service, patriarchal authority
The city, the megalopolis	The village, rural community

We hope that these considerations have permitted the reader to at least question the soundness of Liberal philosophy, while also hinting at an alternative human type—the *traditionalist*—which we will have reason to refer to, although we will use such labels as little as possible due to all the problems that accompany them.

For now, we can conclude by observing that the American Right and the Left fight endlessly for the controls of a hideous machine which the traditionalist would not degrade himself by operating even if the controls were placed in his hands, nor would he degrade his fellows by participating in its control over them. Contemporary political involvement urges man to fight over a prize that the traditionalist sees as a poison. It teaches him to yearn for a victory that the traditionalist senses to be a suicide.

DEMOCRACY

♦♦♦

General remarks.

"The cause of democracy's stupidities is confidence in the anonymous citizen; and the cause of its crimes is the anonymous citizen's confidence in himself."

~ Nicolás Gómez Dávila

"For monarchy to work, one man must be wise. For democracy to work, a majority of the people must be wise. Which is more likely?"

~ Charles Maurras

Tell the average American that political parties are toxic, and you may get a nod of agreement. Suggest that voter misinformation is a serious impediment to functional government, and you may again find some common ground. But if you then suggest that these problems are rooted *in the very nature of democracy*, then you will meet, and best, a confused stare and the sound of crickets.

Here in the age of freethinking individualism, we are led to believe that no doctrine is beyond doubt and no person beyond criticism. Our government officials are readily disrespected, or at least viewed with suspicion. Even in the most patriotic social circles, even amongst the 'good ole boys', we aren't surprised to hear talk about shooting the President if he is not the candidate these 'patriots' voted for. In our democracy, then, we are willing to call everything into question—*except democracy itself*. The ideal of democratic government, we treat as dogma—in fact it might be the only dogma we have.

The purpose of this section is not to paint a picture of democracy as always, everywhere, and in every form, an evil. It is rather to offer criticism of it—to round out the picture—because if we cannot acknowledge the weaknesses of our own system, then we render ourselves incapable of facing any problems that might be rooted in the system itself; and indeed it turns out that, after some honest

reflection, most of our contemporary problems are of just that nature.

Democracy is only bad, or only becomes bad, when it is built around a misguided idea of what it means to be human, and when it becomes so revered that it escapes all forms of critical reflection. At that point, it becomes what we could describe as a *superstition*, because a superstition is an activity or belief that continues even when those who practice it no longer understand its nature, purpose, beginning, or limits.

The traditional world was not necessarily set against democracy. It simply believed that such a system did not provide the most effective means for achieving peace, supporting personal autonomy, and facilitating the pursuit of the good life. In the medieval period, the preference was for monarchy. At other times, aristocracy was the norm. Always there were elements of democratic thought incorporated into the system, insofar as this was practicable.

Modern regimes, on the other hand, hold democracy in highest regard. Furthermore, we hold every other possible political system in disgust, and in this way we are much more rigid and narrow than our ancestors, since they made efforts to compare, discern, and synthesize positive aspects from all political forms.

Thus, if we single out democracy for critique, it is not so much because the traditional world had no room for it, or because we consider it an unqualified evil, but because the Liberal world where we live today seems to have room for it *and nothing else*. The modern Liberal-Democratic world is intolerant to an unprecedented degree when it comes to political options, and this narrowness is disturbing. If we can figure out why we have settled into this dogmatic insistence on the democratic ideal as the only ideal worth considering, then we will have learned something.

A second reason to engage in a study such as this, even though the first alone is sufficient justification, is that if you cannot take seriously any alternative point of view other than your own, then you are a bigot. A Western Christian who cannot imagine a sincere Hindu, one who takes his own religion as seriously as any saint, a Hindu who loves truth and who is therefore deserving of respect as a fellow pilgrim seeking after God—then this Christian is a bigot. In the same way, the Westerner who cannot imagine a monarchy without automatically inferring backwardness, tyranny, ignorance,

and injustice, is blind both to the insufficiencies of his beloved democracy and to the strengths of the various alternatives.

A historical fallacy.

First, we must situate our modern notion of democracy in its proper historical significance by acknowledging it as the novelty that it is.

Gonzague de Reynold wrote:

> It has been attempted to give ancestors to modern democracy: ancient democracies, the urban or peasant democracies of the Middle Ages. These are only pictures acquired by a newly rich to adorn his chateau; he may take on the name but he is not of the same house.[1]

What we call democracy has no precedent in terms of Western civilization. The common references to Athens and Rome are inappropriate. Yes, the government was in some cases carried out by the *citizens*, and the citizens participated in the courts and legislation. But these were slave societies and so whatever freedoms or participatory powers were exercised by the citizens, they were of a very exclusive nature. The citizenry was in fact a minority, and so what they called democracy was really nothing but the belief in the self-government of the elite. *Majority rule for them meant the majority opinion of a ruling minority.*

Only if we limited political power to a small percentage of economically powerful individuals in America, and allowed only those few to vote, and then called the result the majority opinion, then perhaps we could begin to draw parallels.

What's more, we must keep in mind that the ancients were conscious of this fact. They were not hypocrites in the way that the American Founders were hypocrites for preaching universal equality while holding slaves themselves. The Athenians were honest, and never would have never preached a populist democracy that included everyone, for they believed that slavery was a necessity for the kind of government they were attempting to establish. They believed that the only way men could be capable of giving the amount of time necessary for government, as well as achieving the knowledge

[1] Gonzague de Reynold, *L'Europe Tragique*.

necessary for judgment of such affairs, was to be exempt from physical toil and menial occupations.

The patricidal offspring of Liberalism.

To quote Gonzaque de Reynold once again:

> Democracy…will devour liberalism, whose child it is. Liberalism from the beginning on felt that it would have to be the victim. Liberalism is generous and therefore weak. Democracy is jealous and therefore strong.[2]

We have already discussed the ideology of Liberalism and its doctrines: free speech, equality, liberty, representative government, universal suffrage, rights, free markets, etc. We can interpret modern democracy as the offspring of Enlightenment Liberalism, for although democracy is only one possible realization of the Liberal ideals, democratism is the inevitable manifestation of its doctrines with respect to the popular mind. Unable to respect the moderation and limits with which the early Liberals hoped to circumscribe their principles (the American Founders, for example, spoke of a Republic and not a democracy), the people carry their slogans with blind acceleration to their extreme ends. We may live in a nominal Republic, but the modern man thinks and feels and acts in terms of democracy. Thus, we can speak of a deep-seated *democratism* regardless of the presence of a structural *republicanism*.

Democratism is at the same time Liberalism's caricature and conclusion. It exaggerates and brings to completion the aforementioned ideals which the Founders, through a prudent inconsistency, chose to carry only so far. Where Jefferson thought that all men could be educated men, and that all educated men could be disciplined enough to vote rationally, it was only when Liberal-democratism had matured in the common mind that America finally attempted to educate all those men and send them to the voting booths. Jefferson was willing to do neither, for although his principles seemed to dictate this, he was an aristocrat at heart. He had no intention of giving votes to his own slaves.

It is clear by the way in which those early Liberals shunned democratism that they feared it; it is as though they sensed that it

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[2] Gonzague de Reynold, *L'Europe Tragique*.

would be their undoing. Gouverneur Morris, Founding Father and so-called “Penman of the Constitution” wrote to Robert Walsh in 1811: "History, the parent of political science, had told them [the framers of America's Constitution] that it was almost as vain to expect permanency from democracy as to construct a palace on the surface of the sea."[3]

There is, in truth, not too much danger in having Liberal sentiments, and in the past there were many noblemen and monarchs who had them. What doomed modern civilization was the extension of these sentiments to all men everywhere, not only as an optimistic attitude entertained by a superior about his inferiors, which could be healthy in a nobleman, but as an opinion of every man, however inferior, about himself.

From the moment Liberal sentiments became the preconceived notions of every man about his own nobility, goodness, and intelligence, there was born Liberalism, which could not but produce the mentality of democratism, and which could only end in the death of the original, somewhat healthy, liberal sentimentality. Liberalism was originally generous, but it could remain generous only so long as it was directed from the nobility toward the world. When it became the attitude of all of humanity toward itself, it became suicidal.

Democracy as the most primitive form of government.

> *“[T]he rise of monarchy appears to be an essential condition of the emergence of mankind from savagery. No human being is so hide-bound by custom and tradition as your democratic savage; in no state of society consequently is progress so slow and difficult. The old notion that the savage is the freest of mankind is the reverse of the truth. He is a slave, not indeed to a visible master, but to the past, to the spirits of his dead forefathers, who haunt his steps from birth to death, and rule him with a rod of iron. What they did is the pattern of right, the unwritten law to which he yields a blind unquestioning obedience. The least possible scope is thus afforded to superior talent to change old*

[3] Jared Sparks, *The Life of Gouverneur Morris with Selections of His Correspondence* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1832), III, 263.

> *customs for the better. The ablest man is dragged down by the weakest and dullest, who necessarily sets the standard, since he cannot rise, while the other can fall. The surface of such a society presents a uniform dead level, so far as it is humanly possible to reduce the natural inequalities, the immeasurable real differences of inborn capacity and temper, to a false superficial appearance of equality."*
>
> *~ James George Frazer*[4]

We view our own period as the apex of an ever-improving social awareness, democratic regimes being the most 'civilized' form of government yet devised. But this view is not adequate or historically accurate. Quite the opposite:

> "Democracy or the democratic state is the natural state for a primitive society where the diversity of conditions is not very distinct; or maybe in an arbitrary state of cells where social conditions are considered having no report to political functions...We therefore find democracy sometimes at the origins of a society or in their decline but rarely at the height of their historic development." [5]

According to Benjamin Disraeli it is not democracy but monarchy which "requires a high degree of civilization." He added: "It needs the support of the free laws and manners, and of a widely diffused...An educated nation recoils from the imperfect vicariate of what is called a representative government."[6]

Democracy requires almost no cultural foundation to be established. Even children naturally adopt democratic methods in their play when there are more than two of them in the group. It is not an advanced form of reasoning to follow the will of the group and to occasionally surrender one's own desires to the desires of the mob. Many animal species do just this, allowing themselves to be guided

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[4] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. 3.

[5] Le Marquis de la Tour-du-Pin la Charce, *Aphorismes de politique sociale*, cited and translated by Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn's *The Menace of the Herd.*

[6] Coningsby, Book V, Ch. 8.

instinctually, falling in line with the surrounding members of the group, de-individuating and melting into one body.

Of course, this point of view also implies something else: that the so-called 'evolution of society' in the direction of democracy is actually a 'devolution'—a regression back to a less sophisticated state. We find this view affirmed in traditional writings, such as those of the Christian Father Hippolytus of Rome in the 3rd century. In his commentaries on the book of Daniel he set himself to analyzing the symbolism of the composite statue in its historical significance. He said that last and most decadent stage in history, the fourth kingdom, which was represented by the "toes mingled with iron and clay", was to be understood as referring to democracies, the weakest and most inferior of all the political structures.[7]

Democracy implies the use of force.

To reinforce the point that democracy is not a sophisticated system, but is rather suited to the most primitive societies, we can cite Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn:

> "One could well imagine that if seven out of ten cavemen wanted to do a thing collectively in one way and the three others decided differently, the majority of these cavemen (assuming that they are of about equal bodily strength) could force the rest to accept their decision. The rule of majorities, in combination with the employment of brutal force, is likely to be the most primitive form of government in the development of mankind."[8]

As a further illustration of the crudeness of majority rule, it is worth noting that even though in theory the proponents of democracy picture their system as a highly advanced form of social cooperation, this is never the case in the concrete political reality. Taking the current situation of the United State as an example, there seems at any given time to be at least half the population which is dissatisfied by the operation and decisions of the governing authority, and in no way feels that the decisions being made by it are an expression of

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[7] *On Daniel,* Second and Third Fragments. Available online at New Advent: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0502.htm.

[8] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Menace of the Herd* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1943), p. 103.

their own will. This amounts to saying that they feel they are being governed by an oppressive and alien authority, and the only reason they put up with the oppression is because they entertain hopes of someday becoming oppressors themselves.[9]

Democracy, then, differs not in the degree of force required to carry out the wishes of the government, but in the condition of passivity it has been able to instill in its people by doing nothing else but 'letting them drive' every so often—or, even if not actually allowing them to drive, at least giving them a tour of the cockpit.

All this goes to show that government by force is alive and well in the democratic system, as it always has been, and insofar as it is alive and well, democracy cannot be said to represent an advance, but instead only mirrors the earliest of possible arrangements. It is the arrangement of the caveman.

Democracy as the depersonalization of power.

> *"Modern man accepts any yoke, as long as the hand imposing it is impersonal."*
>
> *~ Nicolás Gómez Dávila*[10]

Bertrand de Jouvenel, who demonstrated in his treatise *On Power* that the rise of Liberal democracy has only aided the growth of power, said that it owed its continued expansion to the impersonal nature that such regimes are able to assume. He says of state power:

> Formerly it could be seen, manifest in the person of the king, who did not disclaim being the master he was, and in whom human passions were discernible. Now, masked in anonymity, it claims to have no existence of its own, and to be but the impersonal and passionless instrument of the general will.[11]

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[9] "Universal suffrage in the end does not recognize any of the individual's rights except the 'right' to be alternately oppressor or oppressed" (Nicolás Gómez Dávila, *Scholia to an Implicit Text*. 2013, Bilingual Edition. p. 181. Since this edition does not offer numbers with aphorisms, they will be referenced by page number for this edition.)

[10] Dávila, 2001 edition, aphorism 1345.

[11] Bertrand de Jouvenel, *On Power* (Boston: Beacon, 1962), p. 9.

Do you detest the encroachments of the state? Well the joke is on you, because you live in the age of self-government and so *it is your own will that you detest*. You govern yourself, do you not? And if you have come to the conclusion that you do not, and that you are ruled, who is ruling you? What name can you really identify? Certainly not the President who, although he has more power than the British monarch, makes only a few laws in comparison to Congress. And who drives Congress?—it is impossible to tell since the doors in and out are revolving.

Eventually you realize that to blame any one man is to miss the point and to have nothing but a scapegoat. You also cannot choose to blame no one at all, for where there is blame there must also be personal responsibility, and so you are left again with yourself, which is absurd. This difficulty, which stems from the depersonalization of power in democracy, is the modern state's greatest asset. This camouflaging of power has enabled endless growth in power, since you cannot fight what you cannot name or see, and so it is not surprise that today the common man must cope with more anxieties, whether in terms of taxation or war or rent or complexity plain and simple, than any man before him.

The depersonalization of the statesman himself.

We select a candidate for any office we are not selecting a leader—in fact we are not looking at character traits at all—we are merely selecting a mirror, and the man who can best function in that reflective capacity is the victor.

> "Politics, under a democracy, reduces itself to a mere struggle for office by flatterers of the proletariat; even when a superior man prevails at that disgusting game he must prevail at the cost of his self-respect. Not many superior men make the attempt. The average great captain of the rabble, when he is not simply a weeper over irremediable wrongs, is a hypocrite so far gone that he is unconscious of his own hypocrisy—a slimy fellow, offensive to the nose." [12]

Since democracy requires the politician not only to try to 'mirror' my desires, but also a thousand others, the one who wins is not simply

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[12] H.L. Mencken, Introduction to Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*.

a mirror, but a complex prism of sorts, attempting to 'represent' a thousand wills at once. The last person he is actually allowed to be is himself. Needless to say, no authentic man—much less a great leader—would subject himself to such degradation. And yet we demand it of all politicians.

The rise of the politician.

> *"The world is weary of statesmen whom democracy has degraded into politicians."*
>
> *~ Benjamin Disraeli*
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> *"Democracy obviously has need of politicians, has need of nothing else but politicians, and has need indeed that there shall be in politics nothing else but politicians."*
>
> *~ Emile Faguet*
>
> *"And this hypocrisy found I worst amongst them, that even those who command feign the virtues of those who serve…'I serve, thou servest, we serve'—so chanteth here even the hypocrisy of the rulers—and alas! if the first lord be only the first servant!"*
>
> *~ Friedrich Nietzsche*[13]

What disgusted Nietzsche so much about the operations of democracy was the effect that it had on men whose role was traditionally one of a superior character. The leader of a people had always been selected because he was presumably of man of exceptional wisdom, virtue, ability, or birth. In short, he received his exceptional position on the basis of his exceptional character. Whatever the area of exceptionality, it was assumed that he was in some way *truly better* than those he was to lead. If he were not better, then it would have made no sense to appoint him.

With the adoption of democratic modes of thought, with the emphasis on 'representation' as the utmost, if not the only, qualification for an office, all of the highest attributes of a man, and therefore all of the highest types of men, are automatically excluded from consideration. Only the man who could present himself as

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[13] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathusra*, "The Bedwarfing Virtue".

most 'representative' of his constituency was considered a valid choice. And so, while it would have been neither expected nor proper for the most important leader of a society to feign a likeness to those he was to lead, it now became the single factor determining whether or not a man would hold an office.

Because great leaders are differentiated—that is to say, they are inherently *unlike* the common man, in that they surpass him in wisdom and virtue and boldness—democratic societies immediately run up against a conundrum: either they demand that these differentiated men pretend they are not what they are, that is to say, they demand hypocrisy; or else they drive these men out of their midst and choose 'leaders' who are not leaders but are simple experts in mediocrity.

This leads us to a second point. It is possible, and in fact very useful, to draw a distinction between the art of *politics* and the art of *statesmanship*: the former can then be said to pertain to those activities by which a candidate seeks and maintains his office, which in democratic regimes involves campaigns, speeches, promises, and expensive PR experts; the latter pertains instead to the actual activities proper to a head of state in his strictly administrative role. These two activities, it has been observed, are mutually exclusive. So long as a man is concerned with 'politicking' or, as we say, 'campaigning', he cannot begin to concern himself with actual statesmanship; and, likewise, insofar as he is acting in his proper role as statesman, he cannot allow himself to be influenced by the fluctuations of public opinion.

If we separate these two roles or spheres of activity, we can see immediately that in democracies or 'representative republics' where the officials are perpetually insecure and dependent on the voters, they are never able to step into the role of statesmen. No doubt they make administrative decisions—and important ones at that—but they do so as politicians, which is to say they do so under improper conditions and therefore badly. Thus, we can say that Nietzsche's complaint was that he saw the active exclusion of statesmen in favor of politicians whose activity consisted primarily in pretending that they were even less than that.

Honorable men are averse to participation in democracy.

> *"Democratic republics place the spirit of a court within the reach of a great number of citizens and allow it to spread through all social classes at once. That is one of the most serious criticisms that can be made against them…Among the huge throng of those pursuing a political career in the United States, I saw very few men who displayed that manly openness, that male independence of thought, which has often distinguished Americans in previous times and which, wherever it is found, is virtually the most marked characteristic of great men…It is true that American courtiers never say: 'Sire,' or 'Your Majesty,' as if this difference was of great importance, but they do constantly speak of the natural enlightenment of their master. They do not seek to question which is the most admirable of the prince's virtues for they convince him that he has every virtue without his having acquired them and without, so to speak, desiring them. They do not give him their wives or daughters for him kingly to raise them to the position of his mistresses but, in sacrificing their opinions to him, they prostitute themselves."*
>
> *~ Alexis de Tocqueville*[14]

For those who still cannot see how we demand the hypocrites and flatterers that we complain of so often, for those who still believe that we do in fact prefer authentic men in our American offices, perhaps a comparison between two men of different nations and different times will suffice. Each illustrates a certain type of a character and answers to a set of cultural expectations.

First, the famous historian, Hilaire Belloc. In 1906 he ran for a seat in the English parliament. His opponent, knowing that Belloc was a devout Catholic and of French blood, made his slogan "Don't vote for a Frenchman and a Catholic." Belloc responded by standing up amidst his Protestant audience and saying:

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[14] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 301.

> Gentlemen, I am a Catholic. As far as possible, I go to Mass every day. This [taking a rosary out of his pocket] is a rosary. As far as possible, I kneel down and tell these beads every day. If you reject me on account of my religion, I shall thank God that He has spared me the indignity of being your representative.

The audience erupted in applause, and Belloc won the seat. He overwhelmed the prejudices of his audience with his manly authenticity, and the people decided they would rather have a leader in office than a mirror.

Turn now to John F. Kennedy, also a Catholic, who found himself in an identical situation, speaking before a Protestant audience amidst a presidential campaign. His words, however, are somewhat different:

> I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute…I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me…Whatever issue may come before me as president—on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject—I will make my decision…in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates.[15]

Between these two men we see a profound difference of attitude, which we may assume reflects the attitudes of the voters to whom they were speaking. Belloc would not compromise his honor to win a vote, and his voters loved him for it. Kennedy, on the other hand, apparently felt that he could not enter office at all without first swearing an "oath of inauthenticity," pretending to leave his faith on the White House lawn.

This should tell us something about our politicians, but it should also tell us about ourselves and what we have come to demand of our so-called leaders. We have, in a very real sense, created a special breed of hypocrite. We have systemically excluded the possibility of any real leader winning an office, because a real leader could never

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[15] *Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association* delivered on September 12, 1960 in Houston, TX.

transform himself into the representative prism of pretense and hypocrisy that the office now requires.

The result? In the words of C.S. Lewis: "We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."[16]

Or, to turn to Gomez Davila: "Democracy is the political regime in which the citizen entrusts the public interests to those men to whom he would never entrust his private interests."[17]

The tendency toward materialism.

In the passage below, Tocqueville comments on the tendency of egalitarian democracies promote an egoistic rationalism that not only undermines social trust but also tends toward materialism.

> "As for the effect which one man's intelligence can have upon another's, it is of necessity much curtailed in a country where its citizens, having become almost like each other, scrutinize each other carefully and, perceiving in not a single person in their midst any signs of undeniable greatness or superiority, constantly return to their own rationality as to the most obvious and immediate source of truth. So, it is not merely trust in any particular individual which is destroyed, but also the predilection to take the word of any man at all. Each man thus retreats into himself from where he claims to judge the world...As they realize that, without help, they successfully resolve all the small problems they meet in their practical lives, they easily reach the conclusion that there is an explanation for everything in the world and that nothing is beyond the limits of intelligence. So it is that they willingly deny what they cannot understand; that gives them little faith in the

[16] C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*.

[17] Dávila, 2001 edition, aphorism 1088.

> extraordinary and an almost invincible distaste for the supernatural."[18]

Elsewhere he makes the surprising observation that, considering these tendencies, it is necessary for the elected officials to direct the attention of the people upwards by encouraging the practice of religion. In this way we can see that Tocqueville is no true believer in secularism and that he understood well the inevitable consequences of an 'absolute' separation between church and state.

Quantity over quality.

> *"[W]hat is this law of the greatest number which modern governments invoke and in which they claim to find their sole justification? It is simply the law of matter and brute force, the same law by which a mass, carried down by its weight, crushes everything that lies in its track. It is precisely here that we find the point of junction of the democratic conception and materialism…"*
>
> *~ René Guénon*[19]

We've already acknowledged that democracy automatically implies force. That the democratic mentality also tends toward materialism, we've mentioned. That this combination creates a poisonous preference for quantity over quality, we will explain below.

If not *irrational*, we can say that democracy is at least *non-rational,* since it prefers 'victory by numbers' and sides with the majority first and foremost without regard to reason and in spite of any objective truth. Everything is about the numbers.

It is no coincidence that mass warfare became the norm alongside the rise of democracy, and that the traditional army composed of career warriors came to be replaced by the armed horde composed of cannon fodder, justified by universal suffrage.

We can see the preference for quantity over quality even in the way rhetoric and debate are conducted. If a certain cause or movement

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[18] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 494.

[19] René Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World* (Hillsdale: Sophia Perennis, 1996), p. 76.

needs to be justified in a democracy, how does one proceed? In logic, a demonstration involved evidence and structured argument such that the truth of a position can be verified. Not so in democracy, wherein a 'demonstration' is nothing more than a mass gathering in the form of a *protest* or a *march*, whether the cause is civil rights, gay pride or the March for Life. The obvious assumption is that the greater the number of participants, the more the proponents of that agenda are justified in their position, and—so the thinking goes—the more convinced the leaders and the general population ought to be of the validity of the cause. The gathering together of a mass is interpreted as a special kind of argument in itself—as a proof of truth.

But clearly it doesn't matter how many people take part in such demonstrations if they do not have a basis in justice, and no quantity of participants can prove the rationality of an opinion. In fact, it proves nothing except a general desire amongst the participants.

In the search for truth, quantity has little weight. If a thing is true *by reason*, then it matters very little how many citizens agree with it, or how many participated in a parade for or against it. This is the difference between quality and quantity, and it demonstrates (in the non-democratic sense) the underlying mentality of a democratic people.

Equality, not liberty, is the ruling passion of democracy.

> *"Freedom has appeared in the world at different times and under various forms; it has not been exclusively bound to any social condition, and it is not confined to democracies. Freedom cannot, therefore, form the distinguishing characteristic of democratic ages. The peculiar and preponderant fact that marks those ages as its own is the equality of condition; the ruling passion of men in those periods is the love of this equality. Do not ask what singular charm the men of democratic ages find in being equal, or what special reasons they may have for clinging so tenaciously to equality rather than to the other advantages that society holds out to them: equality is the distinguishing characteristic of the age they live in; that of itself is enough to explain that they prefer it to all the rest."*

~ Alexis de Tocqueville[20]

This observation is not merely an interesting bit of sociological trivia but becomes extremely important when we enter a discussion of equality and its relationship to liberty. Without getting too far ahead of ourselves, we can simply say that liberty and equality cannot both be sought at the same time and to the same degree, because at a certain point they become mutually exclusive. Equality cannot be sought except at the expense of liberty, and vice versa. Thus, a social preference for equality will inevitably demand the sacrifice of liberty.

Monarchy as a counterpoint for the American mind.

> *"Every teacher of comparative political science will discover what enormous effort it requires to impart a clear notion of European monarchical institutions to even quite mature students. A Napoleonic tyranny, a dictatorship— this is easily within the realm of their comprehension. But a legitimate monarchy seems to the American a simple absurdity, and he cannot understand how otherwise quite intelligent people can have faith in such a thing."*
>
> *~ Ernst Bruncken*[21]

G.K. Chesterton defined bigotry as "the incapacity to conceive seriously the alternative to a proposition."[22] According to this definition, Americans suffer from an extreme political bigotry. Regardless of how dissatisfied they are with their political circumstances, they cannot or will not (it matters little which, at this point) imagine that any real alternative could exist. And they apply this not only to their own situation, which would be somewhat understandable, but even to their view of history. They seem unable to picture a functional and benevolent monarchy existing at any point in time, regardless of the undeniable record of such regimes.

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[20] Tocqueville, op. cit., p. 584.

[21] Ernst Bruncken, *Die amerikanische Volksseele* (Gotha: Perthes, 1911).

[22] G.K. Chesterton, *Lunacy and Letters.*

It is thus rendered nearly impossible to speak to Americans of any political arrangement *other than* liberal democracy.[23]

It was for this reason that we delayed our discussion of monarchy until after we were able to offer some critical remarks on democracy as an ideal. It was my hope that those remarks would prepare and enable the earnest reader to appreciate the positive aspects of monarchical government, whether we are speaking of a constitutional monarchy or some other historical form. Regardless of whether my preparatory remarks were successful, it was necessary to make the effort, because the plain fact is that no real analysis of our own system is possible if we cannot at least historically understand the possible alternatives.

Even if the reader remains convinced of the superiority of democracy after reading this section, he will at least have a more realistic and therefore *reasonable* notion of monarchy which he can compare with his preferred system. Thus, a general enumeration of the strengths of monarchy will be of great benefit as a *counterpoint* to what, for most Americans, is an opinion justified by nothing except national pride.

Three arguments for monarchy from St. Thomas Aquinas.

> *"[We] must now inquire what is better for a province or a city: whether to be ruled by one man or by many…*
>
> *Now it is manifest that what is itself one can more efficaciously bring about unity than several… several men, for instance, could not pull a ship in one direction unless joined together in some fashion. Now several are said to be united according as they come closer to being one. So one*

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[23] See also D. W. Brogan, *The American Character* (New York: Knopf, 1944), p. 146: "In the same way, the word 'republic' has an almost magical significance for Americans…whatever the origin of the belief, it is now part of the American credo that only citizens of a republic can be free. And no matter what romantic interest Americans may display in the human side of monarchy, it should never be forgotten that politically they regard it as a childish institution."

> *man rules better than several who come near being one.*
>
> *Again, whatever is in accord with nature is best, for in all things nature does what is best. Now, every natural governance is governance by one…Wherefore, if artificial things are an imitation of natural things and a work of art is better according as it attains a closer likeness to what is in nature, it follows that it is best for a human multitude to be ruled by one person.*
>
> *This is also evident from experience. For provinces or cities which are not ruled by one person are torn with dissensions and tossed about without peace, so that the complaint seems to be fulfilled which the Lord uttered through the Prophet [Jer 12:10]: "Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard." On the other hand, provinces and cities which are ruled under one king enjoy peace, flourish in justice, and delight in prosperity."*
>
> *~ St. Thomas Aquinas*[24]

The arguments of St. Thomas are helpful not only because of their simplicity (anyone could memorize them in a minute) and cogency (they would be difficult to directly refute) but because they convey very well the traditional modes of reasoning.

For example, the doctor bases his arguments on nature, which is to say, *concrete reality* as it is. He does not begin in an abstract ideal which he then attempts to realize, as must be done with democracy. He also insists on rationality, and then follows with historical experience. Also, to get a further idea of the medieval mind, he stresses the need for *unity*, which is a specifically traditional principle, as opposed to the liberal belief in 'progress by competition'. Furthermore, he argues from nature and its mode of governance. He does this because natural laws are derived from the eternal law, which is nothing other than the mind of God. Therefore, it can be assumed that nature has educational value. If natural things are governed by one, then the artificial things of man can be considered superior if they follow its structure. This does not stop at

[24] *De Regno*, Book 1, paragraph 3.

manufacture but extends even into politics because statesmanship is an art, and "Art is the imitation of Nature in her manner of operation."[25]

Security of station and dispassionate judgment.

> *"Constitutional monarchy offers us…that neutral power so indispensable for all regular liberty. In a free country the king is a being apart, superior to differences of opinion, having no other interest than the maintenance of order and liberty. He can never return to the common condition, and is consequently inaccessible to all the passions that such a condition generates, and to all those that the perspective of finding oneself once again within it necessarily creates in those agents who are invested with temporary power."*
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> *~ Benjamin Constant*[26]

We are tempted to think that King Solomon, if he had been one of our duly elected officials, would have actually cut the baby in half. We say this because all elected officials seem to be, at most, half-acceptable specimens. They always split the people down the middle, and in like fashion the justice that emanates from their offices always has an abortive character to it. If a good law enters, it comes out maimed and disfigured beyond recognition because they are bound, by the nature of their position, to always tend toward the 'happy middle', the 'reasonable compromise'.

Objectivity for such men is completely impossible: not only can they not access objective judgment; they cannot access their own judgment at all. Their decisions rest entirely on the will of their constituency, whether that means votes or the moneyed interests responsible for their successful campaigning.

An official whose job is on the line (and an elected official's job is perpetually on the line) can never detach himself from concern for his own self-preservation, and in fact the quicker and more tumultuous the electoral process, the less he is able to turn his mind away from himself and toward the demands of justice. A king, even

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[25] *Summa Theologica,* 1.117.1.

[26] Benjamin Constant, *Constant: Political Writings*, pp. 186-187.

a foolish or mediocre one, can at least apply whatever wisdom he has to the task before him; the elected official, on the other hand, even if he is wise, is too busy preserving his job to ever begin doing it.

Self-government is a contradiction in terms.

> *"It is possible, with the help of prudently balanced institutions, to provide everyone with effective safeguards against Power. But there are no institutions on earth which enable each separate person to have a hand in the exercise of Power, for Power is command, and everyone cannot command. Sovereignty of the people is, therefore, nothing but a fiction, and one which must in the long run prove destructive of individual liberties."*
>
> *~ Bertrand de Jouvenel*[27]

Anyone who promises the people the power of self-government is immediately suspect as either a conscious or an unconscious propagandist, for he promises a pleasant notion that sounds plausible and even laudable as an ideal, but which is utterly impossible in practice. For a straightforward explanation of why this is true, one might turn to Rene Guénon:

> If the word 'democracy' is defined as the government of the people by themselves, it expresses an absolute impossibility and cannot even have a mere *de facto* existence—in our time or in any other. One must guard against being misled by words: it is contradictory to say that the same persons can be at the same time rulers and ruled, because, to use Aristotelian terminology, the same being cannot be 'in act' and 'in potency' at the same time and in the same relationship. The relationship of ruler and ruled necessitates the presence of two terms: there can be no ruled if there are not also rulers, even though these be illegitimate and have no other title to power than their own pretensions; but the great ability of those who are in control in the modern world lies in making the people believe that they are governing themselves; and the people are the more inclined to

[27] Jouvenel, op. cit., p. 257.

> believe this as they are flattered by it, and as, in any case, they are incapable of sufficient reflection to see its impossibility.[28]

By referring to Aristotle's terminology we can disband the illusion through simple reasoning: it is not possible for a man to *sit* and *not sit* at the same time. He has the power to sit, certainly, but at any given moment he is either *actually* sitting or he is *potentially* sitting but *actually* not sitting. All men can both sit and not sit, but it is impossible for both to be done by the same man at the same time. For those who appreciate logic, this suffices to disqualify the notion of self-government automatically. Nor is this limited to high-minded political philosophers, as it could be heard in the American colonies from Protestant preachers the likes of John Cotton:

> Democracy, I do not conceyve, that God did ever ordeyne as a fitt government either for church or commonwealth. If the people be governors, who shall be governed?[29]

If the people govern then there is no one to be governed, and this is equivalent to anarchy. The fact that men who claim to be self-governed do not live in actual anarchy is simply proof of the illusion under which they live, that they have only escaped subjection by becoming subjects-in-denial.

Self-government as experienced by the individual.

> *"You have, it is true, a twenty-millionth share in the government of others, but only a twenty-millionth share in the government of yourself. You are therefore much more conscious of being governed than of governing."*
>
> *~ Bertrand Russell*[30]

The theory of self-government is much more pleasing than the reality, because it does not take into account the psychological experience of the individual participant, but rather concerns itself only with lovely abstractions. In actual practice, the abstraction

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[28] Rene Guénon, op.cit., p. 74.

[29] Larzer Ziff, *The Career of John Cotton: Puritanism and the American Experience* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1962). p. 28.

[30] Bertrand Russell, "Authority and the Individual," *The First Reith Lectures* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949).

becomes a sort of Promethean agony, a specific type of suffering that results from man attempting, in hubris, the impossible.

'Self-government' is a marriage of two terms, expressible mathematically as a ratio (self-government). The first thing we should observe about this relationship is that the first term is always static while the second is potentially infinite. The smaller the second term, which is to say, the fewer the participants and the simpler the apparatus of government, which within democracy is theoretically *everyone*, the more tolerable we find the arrangement, and the more believable it becomes. But as the second term approaches infinity, we feel our isolated selves dissolving into insignificance in the face of the imponderably complex machinery that we are supposed to be controlling. The wider the theoretical circumference of this self-government, the smaller the share of each self in the governing of the selves which comprise it. We begin to understand that what was flattering in theory can become terrifying in practice.

Thus, universal suffrage enfranchised everyone and, in doing so, reduced everyone's power to the smallest share possible. While this was acceptable when it was conceived as a clever way of preventing one man from having power over another, it becomes intolerable when we realize that our power over ourselves sacrificed in the bargain. The individual, in a regime of universal suffrage, has an absolute minimum of influence on the society of which he is a part.

The apologists of modernism may retort that, in the *ancien regime*, the individual did not have even the nominal power that we are arguing against presently. This is due to their prejudice toward Liberal arrangements which excludes from their comprehension any alternative means of political effectiveness.

To point to one traditionally *empowering* institution that is quite incomprehensible today, we can mention patriarchy. In a family where the father is considered the *head* and actually functions in that role, the mother technically does not have *equal rights* explicitly stated, much less do the children have any sort of *suffrage*. Nonetheless, although the child does not have a vote, he has his father's ear. He knows his father, and his father knows him and is intimately familiar with the life and situation of the realm where he so governs. In this patriarchal arrangement, the subjects do not have any of the rights and safeguards of the modern citizen, but they have infinitely more sway within that patriarchal sphere. It is an 'organic'

political power and is therefore far more reliable that any abstract legal measure.

Now we may extend this familial arrangement to its broader expression in the traditional world, which was thoroughly patriarchal in attitude and operation. Instead of a President he'd never see and representatives he'd never meet, the peasant had a single lord. This lord was a local master whom he knew by sight even though he had no television or newspaper. This proximity allowed for an organic familiarity between ruler and ruled. They were not on a first name basis, of course, but they were acquainted in the sense that they could be rightly considered *neighbors*, even if they were not equals. This organic familiarity meant that the peasant paid his taxes in person, complained in person, and if need be, he hung the lord in person on a neighborhood tree.

Keep in mind that we are speaking of the local nobility, because this was the only ruler of the land whose rule was felt by the peasant. The common man was aware of the king, or the emperor, but the more distant the ruler, the further removed he would have been from the peasant's own life. In short, his relationship to authority was the inverse of what ours is today, where those who impact our lives the most are those furthest from us. The peasant and his patriarch formed a more or less autonomous sphere, although this sphere existed in conjunction with concentric or intersecting circles. Because of this *subsidiarity*, what little sway the peasant had in the eye of his superior had more in common with that of a son to his father, and it would be anachronistic to imagine him to be as impotent as a modern American would be if deprived of voting rights. The peasant's voice was incomparably louder because the ratio of ruler to ruled was so much smaller within a given jurisdiction.

Only the patriarch can identify with the general interest of the people.

> *"[S]ince it is human nature for habit to engender affection, the king, though acting at first only from concern for authority, comes to act with affection as well and in the end to be motivated by affection."*

~ Bertrand de Jouvenel[31]

"Real kingship — hard as it may be to get this idea into the heads of our narrowminded democrats — seems to be created by God for the special purpose of protecting the vast masses of a people against the possibility of violation by a popular elite. . . The popular elite, be it a cultural, a social or an economic one does not want, under ordinary, normal circumstances to recognize a master or at least only the semblance of one, a fact which is forgotten again and again or which is purposely kept quiet. Only in extreme danger and distress this elite suffers a master and king, should one be at hand. But for the masses a king standing above all classes and parties is under all circumstances necessary and desirable."

~ Dr. Schmidt-Gibichenfels[32]

Theodore Roosevelt once asked Francis Joseph, Emperor of Austria, what the role of a monarch in this modern age could possibly be, and the Emperor answered: "To protect my nations from their governments!"

This interpretation is not uncommon and can even be seen as part of the reason monarchy was eventually overthrown—it could not be permitted to remain since it put limits on the expansion of power in favor of the people:

> The very support which republican doctrine finds in 'democracy' has been handed down directly from the royal tradition: the king, ever since the early Middle Ages has ruled against the privileged classes, allying himself with the common people, later on with the third estate. And it is precisely the rupture of this alliance which brought about the fall of the monarchy.[33]

This attitude paints a true picture of monarchy in most periods: he is not *the government* but is rather *the advocate of his people in the*

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[31] Jouvenel, op. cit., p. 118.

[32] Dr. Schmidt-Gibichenfels, *Die demokratische Luge und der Krieg*, Berlin, 1915.

[33] Lucien Romier, *Explication De Notre Temps,* Paris, 1925, p. 195.

government, or at least has the capacity to function as such. For in medieval society the monarch met with nobility, and by his ever-so-slight functional superiority over his peers, he was able to in some way transcend their particular interests for the sake of the general interest—the interest of the people. Today it is much the same: while the seats in senators and presidents are manipulated by special interests, the monarch whose position is secure can withdraw and contemplate the needs of the common man and the population at large—something it is almost impossible for everyone else to do. Thus, only a monarch can effectively protect his people from their government when such a necessity arises.

This process answers to human nature. A man invested with power will inevitably feel it in his ego. This is unavoidable and is no less present in socialist and democratic regimes than it is in any monarchy. The task, then, if we must deal with men who are always prone to egoism, is to ask which form of government is most conducive to that process of sublimation by which the egoism of the empowered is converted into an authentic sense of duty and care toward one's subordinates. In short, which regime is more likely to produce power-hungry, self-centered beings who view their subjects as footstools, and which encourages rules to instead view the people as family members under his protection?

While it is possible to conceive of a king who cares for his people out of *familial affection*, it is utterly impossible to conceive of a bureaucracy caring for its people for any other reason than efficiency. We say this for two reasons: first because a bureaucracy is too impersonal to feel anything whatsoever, regardless of the humanity of the fact that it may be composed of men. Second, because all such bureaucracies, particularly electoral bureaucracies of democracy, are by nature positions of insecurity. A man concerned always for himself does not have the opportunity to escape from self-concern and to allow his ego to fully identity the people with itself—a necessary condition for him to *love them as himself*. He needs both security and time, and he has neither. The king, on the other hand, may achieve this identification:

> And in this way the institution of monarchy, so far from merely subsuming the interests of the mass into those of one man, became sensitive to every wound received by every little cell. A secure hold on Power and its descent in a regular line assured the maximum of identification of egoism with the general advantage. Whereas, contrariwise, a transient or precarious

> hold on Power tends to make of the nation merely the instrument of a personal destiny, of an egoism which resists absorption in the whole.[34]

Here we may be tempted to recoil in horror as we imagine the king viewing his people as an extension of himself, depersonalizing them into so many objects to be moved about on a playing board. Yet a cursory study of the psychology of *identification*, combined with a character study of great monarchs, would show us that the process is quite the opposite: it is the ego of the king that becomes absorbed in the people, rather than the people subsumed by the king. It is he who begins finally to feel their pain as his, and their good as his, at least as much as this is possible. The former problem, which degrades the people into objects to be moved to the advantage of their superiors, while admittedly possible in a monarchy, is not only possible but virtually guaranteed to happen within the framework of democracy, where the healthy form of identification is simply not possible:

> The more quickly the holders of Power succeed each other, the less completely can their egoism be extended to a body which is but their mount of a day. Their ego stands more apart and takes its enjoyments in more vulgar fashion. Or else, if their egoism can be projected outwards at all, it stops at a formation, such as a party, with which it can stay in long association. So that the nation gets ruled by a succession of men who have identified their egos not with it but with parties in it.[35]

And so, we see that in America if the president does manage to identify with his people, it is only be with a certain subset of the people, while he must view the remainder not merely with the indifference of a negligent monarch, but with outright hostility, for they are truly his enemies.

Patriarchy or the police state.

> *"The full realization that the Catholic world is faced by the simple alternative of the patriarch or the policeman would have spared millions of lives."*

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[34] Jouvenel, *On Power*, p. 135.

[35] Ibid.

~ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn[36]

The idea that a man can live in a functional society, can participate in its government, and at the same time not feel himself governed at any time, is one of the more frustrating contradictions that must be endured when hyper-individualism becomes the norm. This attitude is reinforced, albeit irrationally, by the myth of self-government, for reasons we've already examined.

Under the influence of this delusion, the individual comes to believe that no exercise of authority is necessary in society so long as everyone 'looks out for themselves'. If any authority is felt, it is automatically perceived as an injustice. This injustice is either the result of an overreaching government (the paternal state), or else it is the fault of some external group of persons who have ignored the cardinal rule of minding one's own business.

Because of the anti-social tendencies brought on by the promises of hyper-individualism, all acts in favor of social justice must be realized by force and are met with utmost hostility and cries that "that government governs best which governs least." The result is the cancerous growth of the police state in which the police officers, themselves congealing into a privileged social class of their own, wield a power hitherto unheard of, deploying methods appropriate to the military. This is a specific fruit of egalitarian regimes, and was not possible in the presence of traditional social hierarchies:

> [I]n a stratified society the police agent is afraid to attack anyone of importance. He is never free of the fear that he will come off second best in such a conflict, and that fear keeps him down and renders him inactive. It is only in an egalitarian society that the nature of his activities elevates him above everyone else, and this inflation of the man contributes to the inflation of the office.[37]

Ironically, it is the downfall of the institution of patriarchy (and the establishment of equality) that historically accompanies the increase of police rule. And as hard as this is for the modern man to imagine, the offenses of which policemen are frequently acquitted in

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[36] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Liberty or Equality* (Caldwell: Caxton, 1952), p. 204.

[37] Jouvenel, *On Power*, p. 384n21.

today's news are ones that would likely have cost them their lives in the Middle Ages.

Monarchy is more conducive to subsidiarity than democracy.

No one should be surprised at the fact that modern democratic regimes are prone to gigantism, with the state consolidating more power within itself each day. An informed look at previous periods would indicate that this must happen in societies that have no structural hierarchy. Nonetheless, moderns are shocked, and this is a result of having been reassured, repeatedly and without any historical basis, that democracy would result in a minimum of government interference. Had they looked toward experience instead of theory, this idea would have been seen as questionable, if not preposterous.

Will Durant wrote: "The state, in feudalism, was merely the King's estate." [38]

While Durant's statement is not surprising to a student of the Middle Ages, it sounds strange to anyone who has been taught to imagine the king as a man of relative omnipotence while presidents are men of moderate influence. But no king could push his people into war as rapidly and with such horrifying efficiency as a George Bush or Barack Obama. Nor can this be dismissed as a technological issue brought about by progress. It stems directly from the configuration of power structures in democracy, which facilitate large-scale social manipulations.

Here we must emphasize the difference between a stratified society and the modern egalitarian regime. In the latter, the state has direct authority over each individual or group, and this is true primarily because all have been reduced to one dead level. Access to one member on any single level implies access to all. In the stratified framework, however, the authority of a man at the uppermost level *does not* imply access to any other level beyond that which happens to be immediately adjacent to his own. He does not subsume command of all that falls below him in the vast hierarchy. He sits on the top rung, indeed, but his arms aren't any longer than yours or mine, and so he can only grasp at the next rung down from his own.

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[38] Will Durant, *The Age of Faith* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), p. 565.

The medieval king could command his dukes, but he could not command the dukes' knights. He could draw taxes from the peasants who lived on his own estate (which was not much larger than a duke's), but he could not draw taxes from the peasants who lived on his dukes' estates. In this way the monarch had no effective way of exercising direct dominion over anyone but the dukes themselves. Any influence on the peasantry was indirect, a secondary result of convincing the nobility of the justness of his cause. It was open to them to refuse involvement in a way that no American governor can refuse mobilization of his population for a national military campaign.

Power corrupts the corruptible.

> *"Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority."*
>
> *~ Lord Acton*[39]

Lord Acton's famous statement, quoted above, brings us to one of those slogans which moderns use to comfort themselves in the timidity of their institutions. Power corrupts, certainly, but the frequency and degree of the corruption depends entirely on the man. Power corrupts, but it only corrupts certain men in certain ways and under certain conditions. Since power is unavoidable even in democracy, then it would be much wiser to learn what conditions lead to corruption, and, more importantly, what type of men are most prone to this kind of corruption. This would have better results than our pretending that we can avoid it altogether.

And what do we find when we analyze the conditions that lead to the corruption of those invested with power—those men which every society must allow to exist if it wishes to live?

First, we find that power is most likely to corrupt the man who has no training for its vicissitudes. That is to say, if two men are to be placed in a situation that makes great demands on their character, the man who has been prepared specifically for this role is more

[39] Lord Acton in a letter to Mandell Creighton (5 April 1887).

likely to be able to stand the strain than the man who, as a matter of whim or as the result of popular enthusiasm, rode to the heights of his station on a wave of electoral sentiment.

Second, the rule of St. Thomas More in his *Utopia*, although openly utopian, had a rationale which anyone can admit as sound: Anyone who campaigned for a public office became disqualified from holding any office at all. The obvious reasoning here is that men who seek most fervently after a public office are often of precisely that character most prone to corruption by power; that is to say, the man whose desire is strongest for wine is probably the man with whom you'd least want to drink it. A man who so passionately believes himself worthy of an office that he is willing vie for it in the shameless fashion that we see in every electoral campaign, is a man in whom the virtue of humility is only tenuously active. By allowing the holding of offices to become the prizes of popular competition, those men of moderate temper whose constitutions will not allow them to participate are automatically excluded, and in their place a category of most undesirable candidates is ushered in.

Third, even for a man somewhat prepared for the weight of power is apt to be crushed under it when its pressure is applied too rapidly. Human virtue holds up the best under natural, which is to say gradual, adjustments and transitions. From this point of view, a man groomed for statesmanship, able to observe at close range the pressures it entails from his earliest moments, would be the ideal candidate for the position—one who steps into the role as he would his natural adulthood, rather than as the result of some "victory" in popular combat after which he is thrust into the midst of conditions entirely foreign to any of his experience.

Offering a sort of summary of these points, Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn:

> Even a monarch of mediocre talents and natural gifts has the advantage of having received an education for his profession. A democratic leader can only have the hasty technical training of those with a 'late vocation'...The education which the ideal monarch can enjoy is not only intellectual, but also moral and spiritual. The democratic leader coming into power is always 'unprepared'...corruption through power, naturally, is worse in a plebiscitarian dictatorship, where popularity combined with autocracy and lack of humility show the most devastating results...On the other hand, the continuous preparation for the

> exercise of power which, with a king, begins practically at the cradle, usually prevents this loss of all sense of proportion.[40]

It seems that in all three of these cases we find that democracy would be the natural incubator of the tyrant, and that it was the hierarchical and hereditary systems of old that precluded the possibility of the Hitler.

The truth is that, if the maxim 'power corrupts!' is a reliable one, then we would expect the papacy to be always and everywhere the most corrupt institution in the world. But instead we find that in majority of cases—with a few glaring exceptions which rather prove the rule—the office of the pope is most often held by a man of very high intelligence, virtue, and devotion. Even if he is simply mediocre or simple or incompetent, it is quite rare that he is "corrupt," which is the requirement we must demand if we are to give the saying any credibility.

The truth is more in line with the words of Frank Herbert, written in *God Emperor of Dune*:

> All governments suffer a recurring problem: Power attracts pathological personalities. It is not that power corrupts but that it is magnetic to the corruptible.[41]

Yes, the king could be a Nebuchadnezzar; but he could also be a David. And whatever else is true, he could never have been a Hitler or a Lenin. This brings us to our next point.

Power as a necessary condition for humane governance.

> *"The absolute ruler may be a Nero, but he is sometimes Titus or Marcus Aurelius; the people is often Nero, and never Marcus Aurelius."*
>
> *~ Antoine de Rivarol*

That democratic movements tend to show more animalistic and violent tendencies is a point given far too little attention, and which could be easily proven by a study of persecutions carried out since the modern liberal regimes came into existence. Connecting the two

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[40] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Liberty or Equality*, pp. 151-152.

[41] Frank Herbert, *God Emperor of Dune.*

significant examples of American history and the French Revolution, A.J. Nock observed:

> The American mob's grim reputation for sheer anthropoid savagery is equaled only by that of the revolutionary mobs of Paris. At the outset of the German Government's movement against the Jews, an American visitor asked Herr Hitler why he was making it so ruthless. The *Reichskanzler* replied that he had got the idea from us. Americans, he said, are the great rope and lamppost artists of the world, known of all men as such. He was using the same methods against the Jews that we used against the loyalists of '76, the Indians, the Chinese on the Western coast, the Negroes, the Mexicans, the—every helpless people in fact whom we had ever chanced to find underfoot.[42]

And so it seems that Rivarol's point was simply that, while it has been proven that the mob can do at least as much irrational violence as any absolute monarchy, often more, it remains to be proven that the mob can, through universal suffrage or any other means, produce figures such as St. Louis, Charlemagne, or Empress Maria Teresa—all products of hierarchical and authoritative institutions. Likewise, if we turn to the religious realm and apply the principle, we can see that the democratism of the Protestant movement has resulted in quite a few Christian leaders of mediocre influence (if we judge not by their momentary popularity but by their historical significance), but has produced no theologian or political character of the stature of Leo the Great, a Pius XII, or a John Paul II. Men will continue to speak of the great popes for hundreds of years—yet in a generation no one will care about Joel Osteen. Always and everywhere, we are reminded that the answer to evil is not the prideful denial of hierarchy or the cowardly attempt to deny the exercise of any worldly power, for both are necessities for higher human development and can only be denied at the cost of retarding human possibilities, limiting them to their lowest level; and we must remember always that at the lowest level the greatest evils are still possible.

Democracy necessitates propaganda.

> *"[I]n a democracy, a government that is honest, serious, benevolent, and respects the voter cannot follow public opinion. But it cannot escape it either.*

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[42] A. J. Nock, "The Jewish Problem in America," *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1941.

> *The masses are there; they are interested in politics. The government cannot act without them. So, what can it do?...Only one solution is possible: as the government cannot follow opinion, opinion must follow the government."*
>
> *~ Jacques Ellul*[43]

Propaganda is the subject of a later section of this manual, because it is a very modern phenomenon and because it shapes the minds of our people and determines their fates. And so, while avoiding too much depth at this moment, we must explain how and why democracy requires the existence of propaganda, both for the operation of the state and for the peace of mind of the people.

It is an inescapable rule of democracy that any public operation, however complex, must be addressable to all of the citizenry, regardless of whether or not this populace has the experience or perspective to assess the information they receive. If it is not actually addressable to the entire population, it must at least *appear* addressable to them. The populace, believing itself the true engine of public policy, will not have it any other way. As a consequence, the operations of democracy must be simplified, either in *reality* or in *presentation*.

If they are simplified in reality, then we immediately see that democracy will only be able to address those problems that even the most ignorant of its citizenry would be able to understand. We then come to understand why democracy has been called the most primitive of systems, because in this case any sort of action would be reduced to the level of comprehension of the lowest elements in society. Such a mode of operation will prevent the government from ever rising to meet any significant issue, such as the formulation of a coherent foreign policy, for it is evident from experience that the general population has no possible way of achieving this.

However, we find that democracies do indeed carry out foreign policy, and that they do so in a very complex and coordinated fashion, along with many other vast projects on the national and local level. Therefore, we must assume that the simplification chosen was not the simplification of problems in reality but only in *presentation*. In short, the problems always remain complicated

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[43] Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda* (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 126.

(since reality is complicated and reality cannot be altered) but the solutions proposed to the public are ultra-simplified so that the public can have the power of responding yay or nay.

This is why the social authorities in democracy, unable to honestly present the problems with which they, as government officials, must cope, must resort to propaganda, the main purpose of which is to offer artificial simplifications of reality to an audience unable or unwilling to acknowledge reality as it actually is. Propaganda, and the ideologies it develops and encourages in order to further its ends, is the life-blood of democratic operations.

The various elements of propaganda are then combined and refined to distill a beverage that the average man can comfortably drink, and which will intoxicate him so that he happily applauds resolutions he does not understand, and confidently fills out ballot sheets covered with names of men he does not know.

We recognize the fruits of this distillation in various forms: political slogans, catchphrases, party platforms, and most of all ideologies (which are by definition over-simplifications of reality). All of these represent pre-packaged sets of opinions, most of them meaningless or at least too vague to present any specific and useful meaning, which serve to comfort the consumer, telling him that he comprehends the actions of the State and agrees with them—nay, that they are *his* actions. The program offered is the program *he himself wanted*. This function—the manufacturing of certainty for the individual—is one of the primary functions of propaganda. The individual thirsts for it; and the government cannot do without it. It satisfies both, and so both collude to keep the intoxicating beverage flowing.

The rising costs of democracy.

> *"Money, money, always money—that is the essence of democracy. Democracy is more expensive than monarchy; it is incompatible with liberty."*
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> *~ P.J. Proudhon*[44]

[44] P. J. Proudhon, *Solution Du Problême Social.*

It was Oswald Spengler who first developed the intimate connection with the democratic mentality and plutocracy:

> ...it must be concluded that democracy and plutocracy are the same thing under the two aspects of wish and actuality, theory and practice, knowing and doing. It is the tragic comedy of the world-improvers' and freedom-teachers' desperate fight against money that they are ipso facto assisting money to be effective. Respect for the big number—expressed in the principles of equality for all, natural rights, and universal suffrage—is just as much a class-ideal of the unclassed as freedom of public opinion (and 'more particularly freedom of the press) is so. These are ideals, but in actuality the freedom of public opinion involves the preparation of public opinion, which costs money; and the freedom of the press brings with it the question of possession of the press, which again is a matter of money; and with the franchise comes electioneering, in which he who pays the piper calls the tune. The representatives of the ideas look at one side only, while the representatives of money operate with the other. The concepts of Liberalism and Socialism are set in effective motion only by money.[45]

Various other massive expenditures that accompany the establishment of democracy are not difficult to identify: since conscription always accompanies universal suffrage, armies become gigantic hordes of common men, each of whom must be paid out of the state's coffers since, unlike the nobility who traditionally waged the wars, they cannot survive without wage. The United States military is now the largest "employer" in the world, and the "defense" portion of the budget reflects this reality.

Further, if we look at the tax burden on the common man, we see that it has increased profoundly with democracy. The same man who must leave his craft to fight ends up paying himself for the trouble. The American of the 1940's paid more in taxes that the typical peasant of the Middle Ages paid in dues, and we must also note that the peasant labored about half the amount of his over-worked modern counterpart. It is of course a commonplace that government operations are inefficient, that campaigning costs a

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[45] Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West: Perspectives of World History* (New York: Knopf, 1928), pp. 401-402.

fortune,[46] but it is rarely acknowledged that these expenditures are necessitated by the nature of democracy itself and are not some sort of "aberration" due to negligent officials, as is commonly implied by those who would fault the government for being what it must necessarily be.

Honor the honorable.

> *"A man's reaction to Monarchy is a kind of test. Monarchy can easily be 'debunked;' but watch the faces, mark the accents of the debunkers. These are the men whose tap-root in Eden has been cut: whom no rumour of the polyphony, the dance, can reach - men to whom pebbles laid in a row are more beautiful than an arch. Yet even if they desire equality, they cannot reach it. Where men are forbidden to honour a king they honour millionaires, athletes or film-stars instead: even famous prostitutes or gangsters. For spiritual nature, like bodily nature, will be served; deny it food and it will gobble poison."*
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> *~ C.S. Lewis*[47]

C.S. Lewis was not one to argue for monarchy, but he was at least honest in his observations. He knew that, whatever man thinks he wants, his actions reveal an impulse to show honor to persons of honor—to engage in that healthy worship of greatness where it is found. This impulse is a completely healthy one because it corresponds to reality: that which is superior deserves respect from that which is inferior.

Hierarchical societies were the result of an acknowledgment of this "impulse to show honor to persons of honor." Egalitarian societies are the result of its denial, and because this denial is unnatural it has one of two results: either it frustrates the impulse (which does not

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[46] We ought to carefully note the relation of campaign costs to those of democratic warfare itself. They are, in a way, expensive for the same reasons, because they are both expressions of popular conflict: "Every change of regime and, to a lesser extent, every change of government is, as it were, a reproduction, on a more or less reduced scale, of a barbarian invasion" (Jouvenel, op. cit., p. 119).

[47] C.S. Lewis, "Equality", *Present Concerns* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1986), p. 20.

disappear even when denied) or else it directs honor toward that which is not honorable or is only honorable in a perverse sense.

For example, the man who really believes in egalitarianism will wind up honoring himself, refusing to see in his betters (who are always many) anything that outstrips his own self-image. If he does not do this and chooses to express the impulse externally, he will worship, as Lewis wrote, money or fame or some other surrogate-nobility. That is, after all, what happens in capitalist societies such as America: they worshipers of capitalism deny that any man is better than any other, but they also speak and act as if they rich man is automatically—simply because of his wealthy—a superior specimen, both in morals and in aptitudes, than those with less. In short, they project the class assumptions of old regarding the stratification of human virtue, with the difference that they project it in purely economic terms, which is perhaps the lowest possible measure of a man's worth. The aristocracy of money is the material aristocracy. Further, by allowing these surrogate-aristocracies to thrive (which they always do when traditional aristocracies are denied), new models of virtue are erected for imitation. Where the wealthy are the most noble of citizens, and where wealth is the very mark of this nobility, then men seek after money rather than nobility. In short, greed replaces the good life—*becomes* the good life. The same happens regarding celebrity and fame.

It remains for democracy to prove itself in things that truly matter.

> *"I say that democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of art, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that exists, or that has been produced in the past, under the opposite influences…For know you not, dear, earnest reader, that the people of our land may all read and write, and may all possess the right to vote—and yet the main things may be entirely lacking?"*
>
> *~ Walt Whitman*[48]

What the poet is saying is that if democracy cannot manage to produce a culture, then it is not a valid or desirable system, whatever

[48] Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (1871).

else it may produce, be that wealth, power, or leisure. This is in fact one of the most powerful arguments against the rule of the people and the modern democratic regimes: that they are bland. They produce technocracy but never beauty. They become powerful but they never develop good taste. This is true not only of modern democracies but even of the free peoples of the past in some significant cases, especially when they entered their stage of decline. Rome, it has been said, merely copied its art and culture from the Greeks—it even borrowed their mythology. And what philosophical heritage did the Egyptians leave? Their constructions boast of nothing else but a fixation on enormity, which is not an aspect of beauty. We can mention the Greeks, of course, but the comparison is, in the end, absurd. The 'free men' of Greece were a small elite compared to the slaves and the non-free that made that freedom possible. And so Whitman's challenge stood firm and still stands: that democracy can begin to make an argument for itself when it proves conducive to the higher realizations of human potentiality. Until then, we consider it on trial, and failing.

KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIETY

♦♦♦

General remarks.

"When a candidate for public office faces the voters he does not face men of sense; he faces a mob of men whose chief distinguishing mark is the fact that they are quite incapable of weighing ideas, or even of comprehending any save the most elemental—men whose whole thinking is done in terms of emotion, and whose dominant emotion is dread of what they cannot understand. So confronted, the candidate must either bark with the pack or be lost...All the odds are on the man who is, intrinsically, the most devious and mediocre—the man who can most adeptly disperse the notion that his mind is a virtual vacuum. The Presidency tends, year by year, to go to such men. As democracy is perfected, the office represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron."

~ H.L. Mencken

No one contests the fact that knowledge ought to play a decisive role in determining political decisions. Differences of opinion only arise regarding the best way to put knowledge in the political driver's seat.

Most of our contemporaries, being naturally suspicious of far-removed bureaucracies, believe the best way to achieve this is to place decision-making powers directly in the hands of the people, giving their collective will expression to the fullest degree possible: aka, *democracy*. This seems reasonable—at least as a "lesser evil"—if we imagine that the only alternative is to hand over totalitarian powers to the state or to some dictator.

But what if this choice—between the common man or the totalitarian state—is in fact a false dichotomy? After all, we've just

admitted that neither of them is an ideal, for the neither the bureaucrat nor the man on the street is the best candidate to direct complex political and economic affairs. Nonetheless, the contemporary democratic citizen automatically accepts the dichotomy and inevitably chooses the will of the voter as the best source of political direction.

Our purpose here, then, is to show that this has been more or less disastrous, and for two reasons. First, because the attempt to place government controls in the hands of amateurs (by way of democracy) has not, in fact, driven the bureaucrat into extinction or slowed the centralization of powers in the national bureaucracy, but has instead made both problems worse. Second, democratism is mistaken because, for reasons the early proponents of democracy were not able to foresee, the mere extension of suffrage to the common people does not, in itself, either liberate or empower them.

The reason for this can be found in the ancient saying that *the truth will set you free*—the obvious implication being that, if one is not in possession of the truth, then no matter what other conditions are present—the right to vote or the absence of external political interference—freedom is not possible because without truth, the slavery of ignorance must become the norm. What we plan to discuss below are the various ways in which ignorance has in fact ensued and is today the driving force of modern politics.

We will make heavy use of Alexis de Tocqueville in this discussion, for the simple reason that Tocqueville's meticulous style and insightful observations regarding the American mind are unsurpassed even to this day, and he is a familiar name, as opposed to some fringe theorist no one has ever heard of. It seems to us, in fact, that if the American voter wishes to develop a lucid view of his situation on the way to forming a coherent political philosophy, then *Democracy in America* would be an indispensable starting-point.

Individualism and egalitarianism produce ignorance.

> *"I discover that, in the majority of mental processes, each American has but recourse to the individual effort of his own reason…perceiving in not a single person in their midst any signs of undeniable greatness or superiority, [Americans] constantly return to their own rationality as to the most obvious and immediate source of truth…Each*

> *man thus retreats into himself from where he claims to judge the world."*
>
> *~ Alexis de Tocqueville*[1]

To return 'constantly' and exclusively to oneself as the preeminent 'source of truth', is not simply to risk ignorance, but to race after it full speed. Bacon observed that the self is 'the arch-flatterer, with whom all the petty flatterers have intelligence',[2] and I believe it was Samuel Johnson who said that the self-taught man has had the worst of all possible teachers.

There is no real excuse or justification for this mentality, although the explanation of its rise and popularity is not hard to understand. Having once adopted the individualist mindset, everything else follows naturally: for if all knowledge can be reduced to the effort of the individual and unaided reason, if all truths are in the reach of each of us in isolation and without recourse to the collective body of truth that is *tradition*, then there is no need to seek the counsel of a friend, a master, or a priest. Everyone can discern for himself, and life is perspicacious to the American in the way that the Bible is perspicacious to the Protestant. Indeed, Luther's *solas* were but the application in the religious field of what Descartes had done in philosophy and what Americans have done to political participation. In each case, we find the search for wisdom reduced to the confines of individual effort, wherein the individual is "the most obvious and immediate source of truth." The rest is history, whether we are looking at the handful of platitudes to which Protestantism has been reduced, or the great waste that has been post-modernist philosophy, or the storm of incoherence and frustration that is contemporary public discourse.

Equality aggravates the issue, of course, but individualism is its root, for equality always accompanies it in one way or another, even if we are speaking of socialism, because the view of man as an isolated and autonomous molecule (individualism) or as one atom in mass of like atoms (collectivism) are both examples of having reduced man to atomized homogeneity.

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[1] Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 494.

[2] From Bacon's essay *On Praise*. He returns to this same subject in *On Friendship*, saying that "a man were better relate himself to a statue or picture…for there is no such flatterer as is a man's self."

The effect of this process on knowledge has been that, while it was once perhaps true to say that 'we stand on the shoulders of giants', it is not true any longer. We've severed our connection, and one man's opinion is as good as anyone else's. We've climbed down from the giant's shoulders, and we find that we cannot even see over a blade of grass.

Rationalism as individualism in the intellectual sphere.

> *"America is thus one of the countries in the world where the precepts of Descartes are least studied and most widely applied. We need not be surprised by that. Americans do not read the works of Descartes because the state of their society diverts them from speculative study and they follow his maxims because it is this very social state which naturally disposes their minds to adopt them."*
>
> *~Alexis de Tocqueville* [3]

In the ancient world the higher forms of knowledge were supra-individual: the sacred books of the Hindus, for example, have no author, are not expected to have had an author, and this fact is not considered to present any problems for the Hindu mind. In the West, this simply would not do—we must know the author, and it must be demonstrably proven that authorship is correctly attributed. This is the difference between an individualist, rationalist approach to knowledge and one that is supra-individual and supra-rational one. The East has retained the latter, while the West has settled inflexibly into the former.

While it is possible, and in fact it is popular, to place all the blame for our *truncated epistemology* at the feet of Descartes, it is important to remember that this is only true to a degree, and he could not have instigated the rationalist revolution if individualism had not already prepared the soil. Individualism is the prerequisite and substrate of rationalism. Keeping this in mind, we can discuss rationalism specifically, since it pertains directly to knowledge, which is the concern of this section.

The rationalist method was the overthrow of the ancient view of knowledge as something which, in the form of *tradition*, was supra-

[3] Tocqueville, op. cit., pp. 494-495.

rational and supra-individual. The first outcome of this overthrow was the appearance of a new attitude toward hierarchy. In societies that centered around tradition, it was self-evident that one ought not to expect the higher parts of knowledge to be within the grasp of his individual reason. The truths he could master himself and on his own efforts were in fact quite few, and of the lowest order. To sit down alone with his scriptures and try to discern their meaning in isolation without reference to any commentary and without any kind of authoritative doctrinal framework would have been unthinkable. This ancient mentality was simply the acknowledgement of a universal truth—that higher knowledge is not and cannot be brought within the reach of all people at all times. If you want it, you must engage in a trans-historical project of cooperation with an authentic tradition.

But after Descartes, Luther, and in many ways after Adam Smith, the concept of knowledge as a *collective possession* quickly evaporated, and once that happens the individual is really left with no other option than to become a rationalist.

Tocqueville observed that America manifested this phenomenon almost automatically, as a consequence of its development and without any exposure to the Cartesian precepts. America, being a post-revolutionary society, was born already detached from tradition, and so the individualist substrate was the native soil for this nation. Individualistic rationalism is, we might say, a genetic trait, or rather a genetic defect. Another way of saying it is that individualistic rationalism is America's *origin-al* sin. Much of the present mental condition of our country can be easily understood once we admit this.

Unrealism and abstraction.

> *"It is characteristic, however, of the course of democracy, that the authors of popular constitutions have never had any idea of the actual workings of their schemes…Since these forms of theirs are not, like feudalism, the result of growth, but of thought (and based, moreover, not on deep knowledge of men and things, but on abstract ideas of right and justice), a gulf opens between the intellectual side of the laws and the practical habits that silently form under the pressure of them, and*

> *either adapt them to, or fend them off from, the rhythm of actual life."*
>
> *~ Oswald Spengler*[4]

Rationalism also divorces man from reality, as Descartes did through the mind-body antithesis, or Protestantism through the dichotomizing of body and soul. This is why Julius Evola thought that "unrealism" was the most conspicuous characteristic of modern civilization. It is difficult to disagree with his assessment. In every area of life man is further removed from the concrete reality of things than ever before. In his daily work he never sees a whole picture, but only a very specific part of a massive process that he neither understands nor experiences; in his politics he thinks and speaks in abstract about things he's never experienced or studies; in the news he watches he learns to internalize the concerns of the Middle East, which he then expresses in his own sphere of influence where they do not belong. He lives in a verbal universe. An unborn child, for example, is not what it looks like, what it feels like, what everyone previous to our society acknowledged it to be: a human child. No, for him it is or is not a "person," and a person is an abstract thing that can be believed or not depending on one's choice ideology, which is just a cheat-sheet used to handle easily all the abstractions.

Tocqueville said that "nothing is a greater waste of effort for the human mind than an abstraction."[5] He may have been right. Even the lofty thought of St. Thomas was thoroughly realist, perhaps the most realist of any philosophy to date.

Keep this in mind when considering the principles of Liberalism in general, which were the principles of the American Founding Fathers, and which have been integrated into the American psyche. The whole edifice was not born out of the ground but built in the air, out of pure abstraction—out of humanist optimism. The seeds of the Revolution and the New Order were not taken from a strong tree but conjured from the intellect; there was no need to test the soil or take into account history's lessons, so confident were the Liberals in their untried imaginings. Much more needs to be said on this point, but

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[4] Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West: Perspectives of World History* (New York: Knopf, 1928), p. 455.

[5] Tocqueville, op. cit., p. 716.

these problems will be discussed in more depth in our study on America in particular, which will be forthcoming.

General ideas and ideology.

> *"When I repudiate the traditions of rank, profession, and birth; when I escape from the authority of example, to seek out, by the single effort of my reason, the path to be followed, I am inclined to derive the motives of my opinions from human nature itself; which leads me necessarily, and almost unconsciously, to adopt a great number of very general notions."*
>
> *~ Alexis de Tocqueville*[6]

In the absence of custom and Tradition man has only himself, which is to say he does not have very much. Again we see how interwoven are the tendencies toward individualism, rationalism, and egalitarianism. They reinforce and perpetuate one another, and as one gains more footing the others come in its trail and soon make up the difference.

Here we come to the specific way of thinking adopted by men under such conditions, which Tocqueville describes as the adoption of "general ideas":

> Men who live in ages of equality have a great deal of curiosity and very little leisure; their life is so practical, so confused, so excited, so active, that but little time remains to them for thought. Such men are prone to general ideas because they spare them the trouble of studying particulars…
>
> "One of the distinguishing characteristics of a democratic period is the taste all men have at such times for easy success and present enjoyment. This occurs in the pursuits of the intellect as well as in all others. Most of those who live at a time of equality are full of an ambition at once aspiring and relaxed: they would fain succeed brilliantly and at once, but they would be dispensed from great efforts to obtain success. These conflicting tendencies lead straight to the research of general ideas, by aid

[6] *Democracy in America*, 2.1.3.

> of which they flatter themselves that they can figure very importantly at a small expense.[7]

Davila, of course, said all this in a single aphorism: "Every straight line leads right to a hell."[8] Adding elsewhere: "Generalizing enlarges our power and impoverishes our spirit."[9] These general ideas will, sooner or later, congeal into a semi-coherent, seemingly obvious, set of assumptions. This collection of assumptions is like a warm blanket for the mind—covering everything and concealing all of its own contradictions, hiding the uniqueness of every individual case by painting it over with the generality. If such a collection of general ideas are fitted together and popularized, it will become socially sanction and eventually unconscious set of preconceptions which allow men to answer every question without ever having to solve the problem it raised. This "master key" to life is called an ideology. Our present ideologies are several, but interconnected: liberalism, capitalism, socialism, nationalism, secularism, individualism, etc.

As Tocqueville explained, the ideologies *never* correspond to reality, but rather reality is pressed into the ideologies by brute force, and is always badly mauled in the process. We must remember, however, that ideologies are not only flattering, but necessary to the modern man: he requires ideology, not just for the sense of empowerment, but in order to believe in the great idea of democracy. For if he did not have answer to all the Great Problems, he would at that moment cast a shadow of doubt on his competence as a voter; and then the modern world would collapse.

Retroactive effects of ideology.

> *"Ideological entities have never been mere fictions rather, they are a distorted consciousness of reality, and, as such, real factors retroactively producing real distorting effects; which is all the more reason why that materialization of ideology, in the form of the spectacle, which is precipitated by the concrete success of an autonomous economic system of production, results in the virtual identification with social reality itself of an*

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[7] *Democracy in America*, 2.1.3.

[8] *Scholia,* 133.

[9] *Scholia,* 141. He also says elsewhere: "Ideas tyrannize he who has but few."

> *ideology that manages to remold the whole of the real to its own specifications."*
>
> *~ Guy Debord*[10]

In the same work, Guy Debord speaks of ideology as "the abstract will to universality and the illusion thereof."[11] A better definition could not be found. Modern man's mania for generalization, which ends in the assembly of various ideological systems, is nothing else but the wish to explain with a few universal formulas the mysteries of the universe. And any apparent success in this endeavor must be purely illusory, because reality simply cannot be reduced in such a way.

But the more important point made by Debord here is that, just because the truth of the ideology is illusory, it does not mean that it does not produce real effects. Men perform actions based on their concept of reality, accurate or not, and acting men have the ability to transform patterns of development, modify interpretations of history, and reinvent culture. Thus, any ideology, although more or less false in itself, can and does lead men to remake reality in its image, at which point the ideology becomes descriptively true.

Because it represents a distortion reality, it is clear that reality can never completely be made to conform to it, but adherents of ideology expend massive effort in their project, and this is the explanation of much frustration and conflict in the modern world.

If an ideology happens to achieve total domination in a civilization, as Liberalism has in our period, then a final transformation occurs:

> Once ideology…finds itself legitimated in modern society by universal abstraction and by the effective dictatorship of illusion, then it is no longer the voluntaristic struggle of the fragmentary, but rather its triumph. The claims of ideology now take on a sort of flat, positivistic exactness: ideology is no longer a historical choice, but simply an assertion of the obvious.[12]

In short, while in the beginning the adherents may have been aware that they were fighting in favor of a theory, by the end, through

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[10] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 212.

[11] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 213.

[12] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 213.

universal acceptance, it ceases to be perceived as theory and takes on the appearance of common sense. Its claims are at that point *obvious*, and the discussion is officially closed.

The illusion of common sense.

> *"Explanations exist; they have existed for all time; there is always a well-known solution to every human problem — neat, plausible, and wrong."*
>
> *~ H.L. Mencken*

Common sense, as we understand it, ceased to exist when good sense ceased to be common. Good sense was always a thing taught and never, as the humanists assumed, an inborn talent present in all men always. From our anti-humanist point of view, then, there are common mistakes, common confusions, and common prejudices, but there is no such thing as common sense. People could avoid a great deal of exasperation if they acknowledged this reality from the start, for it seems that much of our anger and alienation is, at its source, the frustrated expectation that my neighbor ought to agree with my opinion on some matter because it appears to me that my opinion is a matter of precisely this kind of common sense. We cannot accept that our common sense is flatly denied, despite encountering this every day.

In fact, if common sense is taken to mean 'what the majority of people consider to be obviously true,' then we might have to say that it is common sense (at least in some countries) that unborn children are not children at all, and that a union between two men is the same as one between two opposite genders.

Anti-intellectualism.

> *"There is a cult of ignorance in the United States, and there always has been. The strain of anti-intellectualism has been a constant thread winding its way through our political and cultural life, nurtured by the false notion that democracy means that 'my ignorance is just as good as your knowledge.'"*

~ Isaac Asimov[13]

Thomas Carlyle once said that "Democracy prevails when men believe the vote of Judas as good as that of Jesus Christ." Although most Americans would not like to admit this implication, which is present in all egalitarian systems, Carlyle's words do capture the spirit of the democratic mind.

We fear distinctions between men. We cannot speak of them. Even to mention a distinction so obvious as race is an impropriety, not to mention the more invisible distinctions that are far more important. So afraid are we of offending the doctrine of equality—of implying that one man might actually be better, wiser, more virtuous than his neighbor—that we cannot bring ourselves to make any distinctions, however glaringly obvious they may be.

This ridiculous assumption of equality has been expressed even by aristocrats like Thomas Jefferson, who said in a letter to Peter Carr:

> "State a moral case to a ploughman and a professor. The former will decide it as well, and often better than the latter, because he has not been led astray by artificial rules."

Well...we have now been taking our moral questions to 'the ploughman' for generations, ever since Jefferson made the recommendation, and the truth has become evident: the professor may be prone to artificial rules, but the ploughman has no rules at all and must be led by stark prejudice, anecdote, external influence, or, more commonly, fear.

Thanks to our insistence on taking every question before the general public, we now have to publicly debate what a human being is and isn't, whether male and female sexes are real or artificial, whether torturing our enemies is becoming of a civilized nation (the denser ploughman can't even seem to figure out what torture even *is*).

The unpleasant truth is that, if you must take a vote, then the votes ought to be *weighed* rather than *counted*, because it is plainly false that all ballots are of equal value. Some are worth a great deal; some are worth nothing at all.

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[13] Isaac Asimov, "A Cult of Ignorance", *Newsweek*, 21 January 1980.

The tyranny of public opinion.

> *"In the United States, the majority takes upon itself the task of supplying to the individual a mass of ready-made opinions, thus relieving him of the necessity to take the proper responsibility of arriving at his own."*
>
> *~ Alexis de Tocqueville*[14]

Here Tocqueville identifies the *passivity* of the American citizen. The justification for such a claim is provided in the surrounding text, which we will provide at length:

> When conditions are unequal and men have dissimilar outlooks, there are a few very enlightened, learned, powerfully intelligent individuals while the masses are very ignorant and extremely limited. People who live under this aristocratic rule are naturally inclined to take as a guide for their opinions the superior reason of one man or one class, whereas they are not persuaded to recognize the infallibility of the masses. In times of equality, the opposite prevails.
>
> Gradually, as citizens become more equal and similar, the inclination for each man to have a blind belief in one particular man or class lessens. The predisposition to believe in mass opinion increases and becomes progressively the opinion which commands the world.
>
> Not only is commonly held opinion the only guide to the reason of the individual in democracies but this opinion has, in these nations, an infinitely greater power than in any other. In times of equality, men have no confidence in each other because of their similarities but this very similarity gives them an almost limitless trust in the judgment of the public as a whole. For it appears likely, in their view, that, since they all have similar ideas, truth will reside with the greatest number…
>
> This very equality which makes him independent of each of his fellow men delivers him alone and defenseless into the hands of the majority.

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[14] *Democracy in America,* 2.1.2.

> In democratic nations, the general public possesses an unusual power which aristocracies could not imagine. It does not impose its beliefs by persuasion but inserts them in men's souls by the immense pressure of corporate thinking upon the intelligence of each single man.[15]

De-individuation would be the proper sociological term for this process, and it is a much-overlooked effect of the successful imposition of equality. Inequality by its nature diversifies the mental climate of a society, while equality homogenizes it.

Is man mostly evil or mostly ignorant?

> *"In contradiction to St. Thomas (and to Luther, after all) the Church often seemed to take the position that man is rather stupid than wicked. Protestantism, though rather pessimistic about the spiritual qualities of the 'sin-cripple,' nevertheless gave him the Bible without explanatory footnotes, trusting in his intelligence (or 'inspiration'). Catholicism, on the other hand, frequently tended to adopt the view that a superficial half-education was much worse than no education at all, and thus in Catholic countries we saw (and sometimes still see) a large number of illiterates side by side with an intellectual elite of high standards. The Protestant goal of education is usually one of good averages—the optimum for democracy. In democracies there will always be resentment and contempt for the 'highbrow' and the illiterate, the intellectual and the 'peasant.'"*
>
> *~ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn*[16]

Here Kuehnelt-Leddihn touches on one of the principal divisions between the traditional and the modern way of thinking about man. When Protestantism overthrew the Church, it proclaimed at the same time an unprecedented pessimism about man's *moral* capabilities combined with a bizarre optimism about his *mental* aptitudes. In short, the Christian, ever since the birth of the humanistic age, is presented as totally depraved but also somehow

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Liberty or Equality.*

unerringly intelligent. The traditional outlook, on the contrary, is better embodied in the words of Prince Metternich: that the people tend to be "good but childish,"[17] seeking after good ends but inevitably by the wrong means.

Now it is not the purpose of this section to approach theological issues. Such a task is reserved for an appropriate discussion, whereas here we intend to critique the views of modern society. Thus, we are more concerned with the socio-political reality that corresponds to each of these two ways of viewing man: good and ignorant, or evil and intelligent. We are concerned here with the effect that the liberal-humanistic anthropology has had on man's view of himself, and the civilization he has constructed around this blueprint.

The question we need to ask is: Which of these views can we say is more *realistic*, in the sense that it corresponds to what we actually know about ourselves and our neighbors?

Obviously if we begin with an honest appraisal of our own personal competence, we'll find that it does not go very far at all. If we imagine the personal range of competence of each individual as a sphere emanating from his person, we can say that this sphere is localized and small. It usually extends to himself, to his family, to his home, and some small distance into the surrounding community. Sometimes it extends a little further. Sometimes it does not. But the point is that there are very few men whose range extends to a national or supra-national level, and these must be considered men not only of exceptional aptitude but also of special experience.

The limitations of competence which we have just proposed should be obvious, yet we know that the average voter in a democracy believes himself competent to pronounce on scientific issues such as global warming (although he has never studied ecology), economic ones such as monetary policy (although he does not know what money is), and foreign policy (although he couldn't find Benghazi on an unlabeled map). Turning to the religious sphere, he believes that he can choose the best translation and then interpret that translation, choosing and verifying proper doctrine based on his own interpretations of his chosen interpretation. This he believes despite the fact that he knows no Greek, knows little of the history

[17] *Memiors of Prince Metternich: 1773[-1835]*, vol. 3, p. 511.

of the Bible, and has no idea that his interpretations inevitably wind up conforming to whatever his "like-minded" friends think.

After any honest study of the practical results of the Liberal view of man, we find that it has done little more than disconnect the individual from any long-term stabilizing structures (political or religious) that may have led him out of the prejudices of his own age. He was liberated from tradition, which embraced several thousand years, to become trapped in the 50-60 years that go to form his generational epoch.

What can we say then of this the new mentality? First, we can say that it cannot have won out by its practical results, which are absurd. It must have won for some other reason. Or, to look at it another way: was the Liberal revolution a result of the Lutherian-Lockean "discovery" of man's intelligence, or were these new claims about man adopted because they served the ends of the revolution.

We find in the end that what we normally imagine to have been the significance of these ideas is in fact a confusion of proper order. The new view was not so much a new discovery but rather served as a self-justification in the name of "Liberty." The new views about human intelligence were *necessitated* by the Liberal revolution, because if they were not true then the various revolutions, whether we are concerned with secular democracy or the private interpretation of scripture, would have been defeated from the start. Their inner logic depends on the truth of the premise that man is rationally self-sufficient, because the alternative would automatically necessitate an interdependent hierarchical arrangement in the corresponding spheres (political and religious). In short, the alternative would necessitate the return to a traditional-Catholic worldview.

The political Liberals were more consistent than the Protestants in this case, for the simple reason that the Liberals had no need for God after their humanistic revolution. The Protestants, however, still needed to convince man that he needed God. Since they'd rejected the idea of man's dependence on the Church and Tradition, which had been the social expression of man's need for God, they had to find some other need for God which could be proclaimed but which would not necessitate any concrete religious institution. In short, it had to be personal, and so they latched onto morality. Morality would now epitomize man's "fallen-ness." Here we are reminded of the famous Taoist teaching:

When goodness is lost, there is morality.

When morality is lost, there is law.[18]

In the downward progression, the Protestant form of Liberalism still holds to the first step, descending from goodness to moralism, while the political Liberals moved on from moralism to abstraction, and attempts to live by the law alone.

Irrationality and majority rule.

"The combined ignorance of ten millions is not the equivalent of one man's wisdom."

~ Hippolyte Taine[19]

Some errors are 'so simple that the mind is repelled',[20] as if they were so obvious as to be impossible to perceive. This is the only explanation for the persistent belief in the justness of majority rule. Those who adhere to it seem to reason thusly: if I know half a truth, and my neighbor knows half a truth, then our combined opinions will amount to the whole truth. Obviously this is not a reasonable expectation, and the outcome will most likely be hodge-podge of incongruous half-truths combined in such a way that we'll either be no better off or else worse off than when we started.

For example, if we imagined the problem as an algebraic equation requiring a number of operations, properly ordered, to reach the correct solution, what is most likely is that my friend and I, if we even have half the solution, which is unlikely, will inevitably have the first half only, for if either of us had the last half then we'd have the first half too, and we'd be in full possession of the solution without needing to combine forces. Thus, two such men, each with half the truth, will never combine to achieve the whole truth.

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[18] Tao Te Ching, 38. It is significant that in the same chapter another connection is made: "The moral man does something, and when no one responds he rolls up his sleeves and uses force."

[19] Hippolyte Taine, Origins of Contemporary France, v. 1.

[20] We are borrowing the phrasing of John Kenneth Galbraith who famously said that "the process by which banks create money is so simple that the mind is repelled."

H.L. Mencken put it in similar terms, saying: "If x is the population of the United States and y is the degree of imbecility of the average American, then democracy is the theory that x × y is less than y."

Even the sciences, as we now have them, will tell us the same thing—that the average opinion of a collective is not, in fact, even on par with the average intelligence of that mass, but is a measure of the floor. In the words of Rene Guénon:

> This now leads us to elucidate more precisely the error of the idea that the majority should make the law...the opinion of the majority cannot be anything but an expression of incompetence, whether this be due to lack of intelligence or to ignorance pure and simple; certain observations of 'mass psychology' might be quoted here, in particular the widely known fact that the aggregate of mental reactions aroused among the component individuals of a crowd crystallizes into a sort of general psychosis whose level is not merely not that of the average, but actually that of the lowest elements present.[21]

And as Guénon was speaking of this problem as it relates to legislation, we are led to our next point.

Democratization of law.

> *"It is a besetting vice of democracies to substitute public opinion for law. This is the usual form in which masses of men exhibit their tyranny...Although the political liberty of this country is greater than that of nearly every other civilized nation, its personal liberty is said to be less. In other words, men are thought to be more under the control of extra-legal authorities and to defer more to those around them, in pursuing even their lawful and innocent occupations, than in almost every other country...It is not difficult to trace the causes of such a state of things, but the evil is none the less because it is satisfactorily explained."*

[21] Rene Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World*, 75.

~ James Fenimore Cooper[22]

Enamored with the idea that majority opinion will be right a majority of the time about the majority of the issues—or else how could anyone consciously adhere to majority rule?—the democratic mind tends, consciously or not, to start to associate truth and justice themselves with the opinion of the majority.

Thomas Jefferson is sometimes falsely quoted as having said "I would rather be judged by twelve farmers than twelve scholars."[23] The quote is spurious, but it does accurately express the present sentiment of many Americans. What else could explain the construction of that most insane of all institutions—*trial by one's peers*?

What madness would lead men to try and solve the most difficult criminal cases by pulling twelve amateurs—mechanics, grocers, carpenters, and housewives—off the street and forcing them to hear legal arguments they don't understand and then have them present the verdict?

We live in an age when it is unacceptable to suggest that judgments ought to be carried out by persons whose vocation is specifically *to judge*, while the more admirable notion in the popular mind is that the judge ought sit quietly and wait to affirm whatever nonsense is produced by the proletariat, whom, out of necessity more than negligence, know very little about the law, which is always becoming more complex and mystifying. The idea of being tried by a jury of peers should be terrifying, not comforting.

Democratization of truth itself.

"Looking very closely, it can be seen that religion itself dominates less a revealed doctrine than a commonly held opinion."

~ Alexis de Tocqueville

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[22] James Fenimore Cooper, *The American Democrat* (New York: Knopf, 1931), pp. 64, 141-42.

[23] Pundits such as Glenn Beck have made the reference on television, although it is uncertain who first invented the saying.

The final outcome of the processes just explained is that all truth becomes seen as a matter of consensus. That opinion is true which is most popular. This is the unconscious premise of democratism and produces its gravest errors.

Knowledge is the most aristocratic—which is to say exclusive—of frontiers, and to imagine that 'the polls' are the most effective way of discovering truth is to plummet into darkness at breakneck speed. This is illustrated by the fact that, in American, the *democratization of truth* has invaded even the sphere of religion itself, the last stronghold of the aristocratic tradition, where, even when men of knowledge were denied their say in every other area, the clergy was still respected as the authority in its own domain. With the victory of democratism, even Christian doctrine became "less a revealed doctrine than a commonly held opinion," to quote Tocqueville again.

Religion itself has gone the way of quantity over quality.

Authority, ignorance, and the common good.

> *"...the superior makes use of his subjects for their own benefit and good; and this kind of subjection existed even before sin. For good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves...Nor is inequality among men excluded by the state of innocence."*
>
> *~ St. Thomas Aquinas*[24]

One of the most important questions for democratic societies to answer is: "To what degree should ignorance be allowed to affect the common good?"

Now ignorance, as we've already suggested, is inevitable and is in no way a sin on the part of the ignorant. Or, from the point of view of metaphysics, we could say that it is a result of cosmic evil and not an aspect of personal sin. Ignorance is simply a reality we must live with, and most of us are ignorant of all but a few things, namely those things that we've experienced, studied, contemplated, and to which we've committed our lives. If we haven't ever given time to a subject, we are probably ignorant of it, and this is *okay*.

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[24] *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 92, a. 1, ad. 2. See also: I, q. 96, a. 4.

But what occurs when those who are ignorant in a particular field begin to demand a say in it?—whether it is the science of medicine, technology, or politics, the answer ought to be the same: ignorance should not be allowed to short-circuit those pursuits necessary to the common good of society. Ignorance cannot be allowed to short-circuit political procedure and justice.

So where does this leave us? We return inevitably to one of the original sins of democratic regimes, which is the demand for imaginary equality, for equality despises the "exclusivity" aspect of knowledge. It cannot acknowledge that some men know what others do not. To say the same thing another way, we come again to the question of hierarchy. Hence, the reason we referred above to St. Thomas Aquinas, acknowledging that *Liberal equality never existed in the created world*.

So much for James Madison's famous nonsense: "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."[25] Angels in heaven, just as man in Eden and after, exist in a hierarchical reality. It cannot be explained, and it cannot be justified, it simply *is*, and to attempt to deny it is *chasing after the wind*.

Logically, we must assume that if there is a hierarchy to the social order, then the superior justly wields some sort of authority over the inferior, and more than this, that because the hierarchy is real and not, as in Liberalism, abstract or imaginary, it corresponds to a real difference in the aptitudes of the individuals. The man on the superior level is, if justice has been satisfied, really a superior man, in one way or another.

This is why it was common sense to all traditional peoples that, on difficult questions, the man whose superiority lay in judgment, discernment, and the study of law, ought to make the decisions, or at least have the most influence on them, and that the ignorant ought to remain within their spheres of competence.

Thus, St. Thomas continues elsewhere, quoting Aristotle: "we ought to pay as much attention to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of persons who surpass us in experience, age and prudence, as to their demonstrations."[26]

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[25] *The Federalist no. 51.*

[26] *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 95, a. 2; Arisitotle, *Ethics*, bk. 6, ch. 11.

The implication here is that the inferior—the ignorant—individual will not understand the reasoning of the one who knows, just as the man who receives open heart surgery does not understand the procedure that is being carried out by the surgeon. And to demand that it be explained in its entirety would be death to the patient.

Universal education and the denial of human nature.

> *"Whatever one does, it is impossible to raise the intelligence of a nation above a certain level. It will be quite useless to ease the access to human knowledge, improve teaching methods, or reduce the cost of education, for men will never become educated nor develop their intelligence without devoting time to the matter…Thus it is as difficult to imagine a society where all men are enlightened as a state where all the citizens are wealthy."*
>
> *~ Alexis de Tocqueville*[27]

Tocqueville's observation would have been indisputable to anyone not imbued with Liberal humanism. In these few words, he refutes the entire premise of the modern school system, and in fact of democracy itself as conceived by the products of that school system. The driving belief of the moderns is that universal compulsory education, if properly funded and engineered, can alter human nature in such a way as to bring about the utopia of the egalitarian enlightenment. A pleasant dream, to be sure, but a denial of the diversity inherent in the human species. And every system based upon a denial of human nature does violence to those being, in this case children, who must pass through its machinations.

As the expected results are not forthcoming, the systematization is escalated, and more force is applied, and the subject is further degraded. This is what caused reactionaries like D.H. Lawrence to lash out so often and so violently against such a system:

> The fact is, our process of universal education is to-day so uncouth, so psychologically barbaric, that it is the most terrible menace to the existence of our race. We seize hold of our children, and by parrot-compulsion we force into them a set of mental tricks. By unnatural and unhealthy compulsion we force

[27] *Democracy in America*, I.2.5. 229-230.

> them into a certain amount of cerebral activity. And then, after a few years, with a certain number of windmills in their heads, we turn them loose, like so many inferior Don Quixotes, to make a mess of life.[28]

And elsewhere in the same work, he elaborates:

> The top and bottom of it is, that it is a crime to teach a child anything at all, school-wise. It is just evil to collect children together and teach them through the head. It causes absolute starvation in the dynamic centers, and sterile substitute of brain knowledge is all the gain. The children of the middle classes are so vitally impoverished, that the miracle is they continue to exist at all. The children of the lower classes do better, because they escape into the streets. But even the children of the proletariat are now infected...We don't want to educate children so that they may understand. Understanding is a fallacy and a vice in most people. I don't even want my child to know, much less to understand. I don't want my child to know that five fives are twenty-five, any more than I want my child to wear my hat or my boots. I don't want my child to know. If he wants five fives let him count them on his fingers. As for his little mind, give it a rest, and let his dynamic self be alert. He will ask "why" often enough. But he more often asks why the sun shines, or why men have mustaches, or why grass is green, than anything sensible. Most of a child's questions are, and should be, unanswerable. They are not questions at all. They are exclamations of wonder, they are remarks half-sceptically addressed. When a child says, "Why is grass green?" he half implies. "Is it really green, or is it just taking me in?" And we solemnly begin to prate about chlorophyll. Oh, imbeciles, idiots, inexcusable owls![29]

We quote Lawrence at length here because his words run so contrary to the contemporary mindset. We hope that this language, by the power of its strangeness, might pierce through our prejudices that have left us calloused to this situation of today's children. But now, having used the colorful language of a literary figure—for Lawrence was a novelist before anything else—let us turn to those who would have been even more familiar with the concrete situation of modern educational systems.

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[28] D.H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, "First Steps in Education".

[29] Ibid.

Dr. Caspar Kraemer, Professor of New York University, was quoted in the New York Times, Mar. 12, 1939 saying:

> We spend more money than any other nation in the world to get an inferior product. The democracy of our education consists of the regimentation of all students, no matter what their degree of proficiency, upon a single level, which must of necessity be low if it concerns itself only with those needs of the best students which are common to the worst.

Professor Virginius Dabney (University of Virginia) wrote that:

> The malady is doubtless due to numerous causes. But perhaps a certain conception of 'democracy' underlies more than one of them. The notion that one man is just as good as another and perhaps a little better has something to do with it...One curse of American life is the subordination of quality to quantity. Our educational system would be much better if there were fewer but better schools and colleges, fewer but better paid teachers in the schools, fewer but better paid professors in the universities with only half the number of students.

President Robert Maynard Hutchins of the University of Chicago also writes:

> Since our students have lived up to our expectations, we have succeeded in postponing maturity to a date undreamed of in the Middle Ages, or ever in Europe today. The American college senior is two or three years less grown up than his French or British contemporary. In ability to use his mother tongue and the other instruments of intellectual operation he does not at all compare with them.[30]

To avoid vagaries, we might do well to pause on one particular goal of the educational system, which is *the wish for universal literacy*. To examine the merits of this goal in itself will help us further understand the merits of the system into which it fits.

Against literacy.

> *"The liberal bourgeois mind is proud of the abolition of censorship, the last restraint, while the dictator of the press keeps the slave-gang of his*

[30] From an essay titled "Spurious Democracy".

> *readers under the whip of his leading articles, telegrams, and pictures. Democracy with its newspaper has completely expelled the book from the mental life of the people. The book-world, with its profusion of standpoints that compelled thought to select and criticize, is now a real possession only for a few. The people reads the one paper, "its" paper, which forces itself through the front doors by millions daily, spellbinds the intellect from morning to night, drives the book into oblivion by its more engaging layout, and if one or another specimen of a book does emerge into visibility, forestalls and eliminates its possible effects by "reviewing" it…What is truth? For the multitude, that which it continually reads and hears."*
>
> *~ Oswald Spengler*
>
> *"…we really can make a move on our children's behalf. We really can refrain from thrusting our children any more into those hot-beds of the self-conscious disease, schools. We really can prevent their eating much more of the tissues of leprosy, newspapers and books. For a time, there should be no compulsory teaching to read and write at all. The great mass of humanity should never learn to read and write—never…"*
>
> *~ D.H. Lawrence*[31]

Loud and clear we proclaim it: the ability to read does not, of itself, make a man any better off in terms of wisdom and meaning. It is a neutral technical skill, but today literacy has been transformed into an ideal—almost a moral ideal, and perhaps even a pseudo-doctrine—of the modern world, such that attempts are now made to apply it to all indiscriminately, as if it were an absolute good in itself, without respect to the individual aptitudes of the person, the idiosyncrasies of culture, or the real needs of civilization. Even insofar as this 'war on illiteracy' has been successful, it has driven

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[31] D.H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (Rockville: Serenity, 2008), 70-71.

the illiterate into extinction only so that the ignorant could inherit the earth.

It is interesting to see how frequently our social projects are construed as 'wars' on this or that thing, which is indicative of the fact that they are efforts against nature, efforts to force an outcome that will not be forthcoming if pursued by any normal, non-violent means.

This new ideal is a product of two fixations, which it is impossible to over-emphasize: one is the egalitarian mentality which demands that no differences between men be acknowledged; the second is the belief in progress, which attempts to carry each good to its extreme limit, transforming it into its opposite.

The underlying assumption was that the only thing keeping men ignorant and oppressed was their inability to have free access to information. Equipped with literacy and this coveted information, it was believed that truth would naturally follow and flourish in civilization. This, unfortunately, has never been the case.

Wilhelm Roepke reflected on these,

> ...high hopes which a progress-happy era had pinned on the fight against illiteracy. We can but marvel that those who cherished these naive hopes—some of them may still be about—never seem to have realized that what really counts is what all these people are to read once they have learned how to read. Nor do they seem to have asked themselves whether the standardized educational system by which illiteracy is eradicated was always favorable to a wise choice of reading matter.[32]

He then quotes Russell Kirk:

> The average Englishman reads nothing except a thin and vulgar daily newspaper, though he has been compelled to go to school for half a century; while in Portugal, the state with the highest rate of illiteracy in western Europe, the reading of serious books and journals per head of population, is much higher than in

[32] Humane Economy, 59.

> enlightened Britain. The broad nineteenth-century public for English literature, in short, has very nearly ceased to exist.[33]

In short, literacy is a means—good within a certain limited context, instrumentally, but not good, much less necessary, in every context and for every person. If this skill, once superfluous to most men, has become a necessity for us, we must ask what has changed that has made us needier than our fathers. Coomaraswamy offers us an answer:

> For a proletariat, literacy is a practical and cultural necessity. We may remark in passing that necessities are not always goods in themselves, out of their context; some, like wooden legs, are advantageous only to men already maimed.[34]

Having reduced the mass of humanity from craftsmen/artisans to a homogenous pool of technical laborers, a 'labor force', skilled or unskilled, we can see that literacy has indeed become vital for a man's usefulness in the labor market.

We have just described the *economic consequence* of the fight against illiteracy. The *cultural consequences* have, arguably, been worse. To refer against to Coomaraswamy:

> Universal compulsory education, of the type introduced at the end of the last century, has not fulfilled expectations by producing happier and more effective citizens; on the contrary, it has created readers of the yellow press and cinemagoers.[35]

The ability to understand grammar and basic vocabulary will not guarantee intelligence any more than the ability to start a car will guarantee that the user will be able to drive it safely, much less be able to find his way from one place to another. Men have not been enabled to raise themselves through the skill, but are rather subjected through it to more base forms of entertainment, not to mention subjection to relentless propaganda which is especially effective when delivered through that superficial and hasty medium, the newspaper, which today has been translated into the internet and social media, degrading 'readers' even more.

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[33] Humane Economy, 59.

[34] Coomaraswamy, Bugbear of Literacy, 53.

[35] Coomaraswamy, Bugbear of Literacy, 53.

The ideal of literacy is a result of the confusion of process and substance, which is to say, it is a confusion quantity and quality, knowledge and wisdom. "Learning and wisdom have often been divided; perhaps the clearest result of modern literacy has been to maintain and enlarge the gulf."

It was against this absue that D.H. Lawrence reacted, and perhaps now we can understand his prescription:

> Let all schools be closed at once. Keep only a few technical training establishments, nothing more. Let humanity lie fallow, for two generations at least. Let no child learn to read, unless it learns by itself, out of its own individual persistent desire.[36]

None of the most virile and colorful elements of culture would be lost by adopting Lawrence's attitude. He merely agrees with Whitman, who questioned his contemporaries:

> For know you not, dear, earnest reader, that the people of our land may all read and write, and may all possess the right to vote -- and yet the main things may be entirely lacking?[37]

On the contrary, it would open the way from the technical, process-based approach to education, back toward a more personalistic approach. Not only could the memory more than compensate for the information necessary for most tasks and trades, but, more importantly, where education existed it could once again take the form of a master who "forms" his pupils, which is a far different thing from the modern school where the teacher merely "administers" a curriculum. It is to this that Coomaraswamy further attests:

> There are hundreds of thousands of Indians even now who daily repeat from knowledge by heart either the whole or some large part of the *Bhagavad Gita*; others more learned can recite hundreds of thousands of verses of longer texts. From the earliest times, Indians have thought of the learned man, not as one who has read much, but as one who has been profoundly

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[36] D.H. Lawrence, *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, "First Glimmerings of Mind."

[37] Coomaraswamy, Bugbear, 53

> taught. It is much rather from a master than from any book that wisdom can be learned.[38]

By ignoring all this we end with 6 million literates who lack most of the experience and all of the prudence of their illiterate grandparents. *The illiterate were eliminated, only to be replaced by the ignorant*.

For example, the modern man's illiterate 19th century American counterpart, lacking a television and unable to make use of any newspapers, would have engaged with and authentic, organic enthusiasm the pressing issues of his own neighborhood and village. He would have heard whispers, perhaps, of great wars and happenings 1000 miles away, but would have known that they are well beyond his ability to fix, and therefore he would not have allowed far-removed concerns to eat up his limited stock of worry and concern.

The modern man who reads his columnists and watches his evening news, does not know a single member of his own city council, but nonetheless feels compelled to speak his mind on global, regardless of his experience or knowledge. The illiterate man is protected from this peculiar brand of idiocy by the very deprivation that we like to blame for his ignorance—but it should be clear that the ignorance we attribute to him is actually our own.

The myth of universal suffrage.

> *"Only experience has ever taught the lesson, and only at the end of the whole development has it been assimilated, that the rights of the people and the influence of the people are two different things. The more nearly universal a franchise is, the less becomes the power of the electorate."*
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> *~ Oswald Spengler*[39]

If there is a consensus on the failure of the ideal of universal education, and not only a consensus but masses of objective evidence pointing to it, then we must ask ourselves why this chimera

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[38] Coomaraswamy, Bugbear, 53

[39] Decline of the West, v. 2, p. 455.

is still pursued with such passion, as if our survival depended on its success. What is really at stake?

Well, it is not the survival of humanity, because humanity lived and civilizations thrived before widespread literacy was achieved and will live on after it falls out of favor. *Therefore, it is not humanity that is at risk, then, but an ideal that modern humanity has adopted—the ideal of universal suffrage*.

If popular education fails to achieve its goals, then democracy can know longer be sustained, since the illusion of universal competence will have been proven false.

Universal education is the result of the belief in universal suffrage: men have known for some time now that universal suffrage could not function with an ignorant populace, even if they only felt this unconsciously, and because this threatens to undermine the feasibility of the democratic idea, they fight feverishly to overcome it with the chimera of education. Let us, then, look at the ideal of suffrage that has fueled this project.

The term "suffrage" itself signifies the right to vote in political elections, and when we attach an adjective to this term, we specify the category of persons to whom this right will be extended. Women's suffrage, for example, concerns the voting rights of women, and a regime that accepts women's suffrage is one that allows women to vote. Universal suffrage, then, means *theoretically* unlimited extension of voting privileges to all regardless of class, gender, etc.

Yet our first point of discussion must be to admit that this idea is always and everywhere only theoretical—something embraced in the abstract and not in the concrete experience of the governed. Even in nations such as the United States, where we congratulate ourselves on our achievement of universal suffrage, we can see immediately that the principle is applied only in part. For example, we know of no society, however democratic, that allows groups such as children to vote. No one even argues for it, and the reasons seem obvious, of course, but the reasons that a child cannot vote are analogous to the valid reasons that many other groups should not vote. The difference is that there are no consequences for ignoring children.

In addition to the discrepancy between theoretical and practical suffrage, we need to acknowledge that even the *desire* for universal suffrage is a very novel thing. The American Founders would not have dreamed of allowing their wives, their slaves, or their unpropertied neighbors to take part in an election. In fact, rarely do we see even the most avid proponents of democracy advocating the sort of universal suffrage that Americans today imagine that they accept.

Whether we are speaking of the philosophical history of the concept or the contemporary reality of its application, everyone stops somewhere. They all set a limit, even if that limit is the requirement of adulthood (a completely arbitrary classification if there ever was one). This unwillingness to apply the principle completely tells us something: First, it tells us that almost everyone knows that there ought to be some sort of qualification for electoral participation; and second, it tells us that no one knows exactly what this qualification ought to be. Because everyone agrees, even if unconsciously, on the first point—that qualifications there must be—then we can consider this an implicit acknowledgment that universal suffrage, even where it is preached, must be considered a purely sentimental notion which no one is actually willing to implement. We may then set about examining the second point, concerning the necessity and nature of the qualifications that ought to be set before the voting citizen.

Childhood suffrage?

> *"It is a melancholy but indubitable fact that in a democracy each social category can get what is due to it both in justice and in humanity only in so far as its voting power makes possible its extortion. No working-class vote, no laws protecting the worker. No women's vote, no laws protecting women…Democracy being a battle for Power, those who are not represented necessarily go under. Children, for instance, having no vote, get little attention, and what concerns their well-being tends to be neglected. For this to be remedied under the present system they would have to receive in their cradles the ballot papers which are the sole means of self-defence."*

~ Bertrand de Jouvenel[40]

We pointed out above that it seems obvious that children should not vote, but even those who agree with this fact are unable to enunciate the reasons why it is true based on their ideological premises; and if they are able, they are yet unwilling because to do so would for upon them certain conclusions which would inevitably exclude other groups from the electoral process as well. Because this offends their sensibilities, they simply ignore the child's exclusion as a self-evident, albeit contradictory, necessity and move on. The conversation is in this way not decided one way or another. It is simply avoided. So let us not avoid the question any longer, and begin by asking why children should not vote.

The first possible objection to childhood suffrage might be the obvious lack of knowledge in the child-voter, whether that knowledge be acquired through experience or study. This objection is obviously valid, but it cannot be the objection that the proponents of democracy, as we hear them in the streets, have in mind. For if the problem was one of intelligence, then we'd be led down a very uncomfortable road since there are quite a few adults whose judgment and intelligence is arguably not much better than that of a boy of, say, 15-years-old—and in addition we can say that there are some young men of 15 whose judgment is quite sound, even without many years of experience to mold it. And so, if we accepted the qualification of intelligence, we'd be no better off, because we'd either have to admit that not all children ought to be disqualified but would also have to admit that many adults ought to be disqualified. Let us, then, admit the difficulty here, and set the argument temporarily aside.

The second objection is one of responsibility: we could say that the child cannot vote because the child is not responsible for himself or others. He is 'dependent' upon another person for his basic needs. This objection is also valid, but here again we would be quickly led down an even more uncomfortable path, because many adults are not responsible for themselves in the political or economic sense. Many live in a condition that, in any historical context, would be classified as the servant or slave class.[41]

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[40] Jouvenel, *On Power,* p. 267.

[41] See the article "The problem of voter dependency".

Universal suffrage as the institutionalization individualism.

> *"In the beginning the legislator did not have to concern himself at all with the son, the daughter, and the salve, for these fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of the father. Step by step they all became subject to the law: the state had broken through into a world from which it was at first excluded, and had claimed as subject to its own jurisdiction those who had in former days been subjects of the father alone."*
>
> *~ Bertrand de Jouvenel*[42]

The greatest victory of universal suffrage was to codify into law the individualistic mentality from which it had sprung. It achieved in writing the final dissection of the last hierarchical barrier between the State and the individual, which was the family.

Within the context of universal suffrage, each voter is to the State a basic political unit, autonomous and ready to be set against every other unit in comparison to which it is theoretically identical. Thus, husband and wife could now be treated separately by the State (although the child has not yet been given a ballot he is nonetheless absorbed through compulsory education). The family, which had always been the fundamental political unit, was no more, and from then on became something *artificial* rather than organic, common but politically irrelevant. Families at this point began having to justify the customary protections they had always received, which now seemed like 'privileges' (for, after all, why should two or three identical individuals receive benefits and supports that an individual does not?).

The problem of voter dependency.

> *"The right to vote is the only test of citizenship; but this right presupposes the independence of him who wishes to be not only a part of the Republic but also a member of it—a part, in other words, that acts as it sees fit in conjunction with the others. Action in this capacity compels a*

[42] *On Power*, p. 180.

> *distinction between the active citizen and the passive."*
>
> *~ Immanuel Kant*[43]

Even Immanuel Kant, an advocate of Enlightenment Liberalism, knew that Aristotle was right when he observed that one of the most important qualifications for participation in government, and therefore citizenship, was independence, not only in mind or in law but also in concrete reality. Thus, Aristotle does not consider laborers to be citizens—although they may have rights and access to the court—since they do not have the leisure time or autonomy required to practice the intellectual virtues. Moreover, in agreement with Kant, such men are for their livelihood dependent on an employer, and so their interest is subordinate to his, which means that their vote is really dictated by the employer's well-being rather than their own. In short, their autonomy is compromised.

Discussions regarding servants are especially enlightening on this subject, particularly those taken from the 17th, 18th, and even 19th centuries. This is because modern men might readily agree that a "servant-master" relationship is one of dependence, and therefore the vote of the servant could not really be considered an independent one. These men, however, will turn around and congratulate themselves on the fact that we no longer have "servants" or "masters" and that, therefore, we can all imagine ourselves as autonomous individuals. Yet how surprised they would be if they were to read the following excerpt from C.B. Macpherson's work:

> The term servant in seventeenth-century England meant anyone who worked for an employer for wages, whether the wages were piece-rates or time-rates, and whether hired by the day or week or by the year.[44]

Thus, it seems that we can call the laboring man whatever we want—servant or the more flattering "employee"—we are still a society of servant-master relationships, and the same relationship of dependence holds true. The employee is beholden to his employer—his security, indeed his family's welfare, is wrapped up with and

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[43] *Metaphysics of Morals*, part 1, xlvi.

[44] *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (New York: Oxford, 1964), p. 282.

subordinate to the welfare of his employer. He does not vote as an independent member of the community, and so the worth of his vote is somewhat dubious.

The twofold ignorance of the voter.

> *"Many people in Europe believe without saying so, or say so without believing it, that one of the great advantages of universal suffrage is to summon men worthy of public trust to the direction of public affairs…For my part, I am bound to say, what I have seen in America does not give me any reason to think that this is the case…It is a permanent feature of the present day that the most outstanding men in the United States are rarely summoned to public office…The race of American statesmen has strangely shrunk in size over the last half-century…I willingly accept that the bulk of the population very sincerely supports the welfare of the country…But what they always lack, more or less, is the skill to judge the means to achieve this sincerely desired end…I hold it proved that those who consider universal suffrage as a guarantee of the excellence of the choice made are under a complete delusion."*
>
> *~ Alexis de Tocqueville*[45]

The typical voter requires two complex and very different areas of competence in order to assert himself honestly and effectively:

First, he must know the man for whom he is voting. If I do not know anything about you as a person, your strengths, weaknesses, experience, opinions, etc., then I am not competent to decide whether or not you can effectively govern (or do any other job for that matter). While I may conceivably achieve appropriate knowledge of this type about people who live down the street from me, it is nothing short of ludicrous to imagine that I can achieve that level of knowledge in regard to a presidential candidate whom I've never met and cannot meet, and about whom my only sources of information are a pair of warring tribes who either paint the candidate as a devil or a saint. The problems here are fairly obvious,

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[45] *Democracy in America*, I.2.5.

but remember this is only the first area of competence I must achieve.

Second, after I obtain knowledge of the candidate, I must possess knowledge of the job itself. If I do not know how the job works or what it is like, what strengths and aptitudes it requires, then I can't select someone to do the job even if I know all the candidates personally.

Here again, I can conceivably fulfill this second requirement of competence if the candidate in question lives down the street and will decide whether or not the forest across town gets cleared for development. I know the man, I know the forest, and I know the town. I may not be an expert, but I am 'involved' enough to justify formulating an opinion with only this approximate knowledge. However, the knowledge required to truly know what it takes to be a good president is astonishingly complex: here one needs not only knowledge of history, geography, rhetoric, military science, international law, and foreign languages, but he also needs *experience*. If I have neither knowledge nor experience, then I'm like a baker trying to judge the technique of a brain surgeon: the baker might have an opinion on the surgeon's technique, but his opinion is not valid and is but the expression of ignorance.

Because the attainment of the level of competence described above is obviously impossible for the average man who works and maybe even has a family, and because democracies like the United States are predicated on the notion that this same man can and should choose the president anyway, then democracy itself can be said to be predicated on the reinforcement of Augustinian ignorance. It not only suggests but *demands* that a man pick and choose between a thousand things he knows nothing about, and which he may have never even considered.

Needless to say, such an atmosphere is fertile ground for the enthronement of ignorance. Consider again our typical voting citizen:

- *He thinks he knows* what's going on with global warming, whether the science is valid or not.
- *He thinks he knows* what sort of effect a tax adjustment would have on the national economy.
- *He thinks he knows* how immunizations work.
- *He thinks he knows* what "organic" means.

- *He thinks he knows* what sort of foreign policy is needed in the Middle East.

This list could go on and on, from Benghazi to the Big Bang, but I'm sure the point is clear: The voter cannot possibly have formed valid opinions about these things. Considered individually, the number of people who fully understand any one of the above points is undeniably very, very small. Considered as a whole and all at once, *no one could possibly have reached a level of understanding that could be termed "competent*."

Scita and scienda.

> *"…we have pointed out before that the discrepancy between the things which are theoretically known, the scita, and those which ought to be known by the "politicized" masses, the scienda, is increasing by leaps and bounds. Even if it is true that general education is improving and that the general level of education is rising—which we sincerely doubt—the political and economical problems with their implications as well as the scientific answers for their solution are growing in number as well as in complexity. This is a race between an arithmetical and a geometrical progression."*
>
> *~ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn*[46]

We have examined the problem of knowledge as it pertains to the candidates and to specific political roles. Closely related to this point, but different in that it addresses human knowledge more generally, is Kuehnelt-Leddihn's problem of *scita* versus *scienda*.

By setting these two terms in opposition he is pointing to the intersection between the information that is theoretically available to the modern man, and that which actually makes it into his head. The distinction could also be described from a slightly different angle, as between *what is actually known* by the people, and *what should be known* in order to reach rational-moral conclusions about complex problems.

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[46] Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *Liberty or Equality*, p. 278.

To use the problem of global warming, it seems clear that, with our sciences as developed as they are today, that those who work in this field probably know whether or not the problem is real or imaginary. Yet we find that, in the end, none of that really matters. All that matters is whether or not the accurate bits information, accompanied by the most appropriate interpretations, actually get absorbed into the popular mind; and at this point in the climate debate it is pretty clear that this is not happening with any efficiency.

This is the illusion of the so-called 'information age'. We do indeed live in an "information age," but we tend to forget that the sheer *availability* of information may or may not have any impact on whether or not that information can be distributed effectively, much less utilized properly. In fact, we could say that the greatest lie of the information age is that, just by piling up trillions of bits of data, we perpetually increase the intelligence of the human race as a collective whole. This optimistic assumption about the human mind has been almost universally accepted since the rise of humanism, and is completely false. There is a very rigid limit on the amount of knowledge that an individual can absorb and utilize, and it is never very much. We all live and die in ignorance of almost everything there is in the world to know. To say this is not pessimism, but is simply an honest acknowledgment of the vastness of our reality, its laws, and its mysteries.

If we begin with a proper view of man, then we are faced immediately with man as the limit. Only then may we turn our glance to the information heaped up in databases. We then see that this is in large part irrelevant to the average intelligence of a nation, since each individual still has his own limits. And neither can we cite the specialists, or those few individuals of incredible intelligence, for my neighbor's knowledge is not in any way mine, and it does not make my ballot sheet any more intelligently completed.

For example, there is an unprecedented amount of information available on the Internet. This gives the impression that everyone with access to the Internet, because they have such a wonderful resource before them, should be able to use this resource to evaluate and decide on any problem they face. But is this at all feasible?

In the end: No. The sheer availability of information does not in any way guarantee that the right bits of information will be discovered by the right people at the right time. The Internet holds an incomprehensible amount of data, and sifting through it to find

information that is both timely and true can turn into an equally incomprehensible enterprise, even if the voter has the stamina to wade through the mountains of partial statistics, slanted reports, adware, and pornography that will interfere with his search.

The ability to split the atom is an example of scita. Scienda, on the other hand, is the knowledge necessary to use our accumulations of knowledge in a moral and prudent fashion. An example of scienda would be the wisdom to judge properly whether or not one should weaponize atom-splitting technology and then immediately utilize it in that form. Our civilization is characterized by great accumulations of scita (power), to the detriment of scienda (wisdom). The chasm between the two, which represents a gap between power and wisdom, is ever widening. Think of those scientists who brag about future parents who will supposedly be able to design their children in regard to height, eye color, and personality. Everyone will be able to give birth to the "ideal child." Whether or not this feat is scientifically impressive is a question of pure power. Entirely separate from that question, and what seems to have entirely escaped these scientists, is how the responsible and moral use of this power will be ensured. What signifies the "ideal" person changes from generation to generation, and it may be a bit of an injustice to design generations by a set of specifications which will certainly fall out of style. And, what is far more disturbing, it is easy to see how quickly the randomness of natural reproduction will come to be seen as socially unacceptable. Real reproduction and natural birth, the risks they imply, will of necessity be shunned and eventually made illegal. That is the tyranny of scientific advance: what can be done, must be done. It is why, as soon as the atom bomb was developed, it had to be used. It is why children now must be injected at birth with a hundred chemicals, and it is why those who opt out of this mandatory medical treatment are considered irresponsible and may even have their children publicly branded as dangerous. The natural child, it seems, is already an abomination to be sterilized by the rites of science, and the natural parent is already being ostracized for heresy.

The cult of incompetence.

> *"I have often wondered what principle democrats have adopted for the form of government which they favour, and it has not required a great effort on my part to arrive at the conclusion that the principle in question is the worship and*

> *cultivation, or, briefly 'the cult' of incompetence or inefficiency...The people favours incompetence, not only because it is no judge of intellectual competence and because it looks on moral competence from a wrong point of view, but because it desires before everything, as indeed is very natural, that its representatives should resemble itself."*
>
> *~ Emile Faguet*[47]

The passage above is taken from Émile Faguet's *Cult of Incompetence*, in which he elaborates on this idea. It is worth quoting at length:

> What is the people's one desire, when once it has been stung by the democratic tarantula? It is that all men should be equal, and in consequence that all inequalities natural as well as artificial should disappear. It will not have artificial inequalities, nobility of birth, royal favours, inherited wealth, and so it is ready to abolish nobility, royalty, and inheritance. Nor does it like natural inequalities, that is to say a man more intelligent, more active, more courageous, more skilful than his neighbours. It cannot destroy these inequalities, for they are natural, but it can neutralise them, strike them with impotence by excluding them from the employments under its control. Democracy is thus led quite naturally, irresistibly one may say, to exclude the competent precisely because they are competent, or if the phrase pleases better and as the popular advocate would put it, not because they are competent but because they are unequal, or, as he would probably go on to say, if he wished to excuse such action, not because they are unequal, but because being unequal they are suspected of being opponents of equality. So it all comes to the same thing. This it is that made Aristotle say that where merit is despised, there is democracy. He does not say so in so many words, but he wrote: "Where merit is not esteemed before everything else, it is not possible to have a firmly established aristocracy," and that amounts to saying that where merit is not esteemed, we enter at once on a democratic regime and never escape from it.[48]

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[47] Emile Faguet, *The Cult of Incompetence*, pp. 15, 29.

[48] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

One would have to read Faguet's interesting little book to properly appreciate his thesis, but it is not difficult to understand that an incompetent public chooses the incompetent candidate, not just accidentally, due to the incompetence, but *on purpose*. For if the choice of an incompetent leader were merely the result of incompetence on the part of the chooser, then we would see the accidental choice of a competent leader for the same reason: it would be a coin toss. But the principle of *like unto like* demands that the incompetent voters actively prefer the incompetent candidate, despising a competent one.

In other words, the worst part about the attempt to institute "representative" government is that it often works: the people choose leaders, not because they perceive that they know better or because they have exceptional talents, but because they believe that these men resemble themselves.

If Faguet's reasoning is sound, then we would actually have a better chance of drawing quality statesman if we adopted the Old Testament practice of casting lots, for the system we use presently does not give us the luxury of chance, but ensures that the selection will fail. To lead into our next point, however, we must acknowledge that this is not a conscious process, but an unconscious one, which is to say it is almost instinctual.

Popular instincts prefer the inferior candidate.

> *"While the natural instincts of democracy persuade the people to remove distinguished men from power, the latter are guided by no less an instinct to distance themselves from a political career, where it is so difficult for them to retain their complete autonomy or to make any progress without cheapening themselves."*
>
> *~ Alexis de Tocqueville*[49]

Perhaps the most profound thing we can take from this observation is its reference to the operation of instinct in democratic regimes. He does not simply suggest that instincts play a part, but that instinct plays *the decisive* part when it comes to both the selection and the appointment of statesmen. This alone is enough to condemn a

[49] *Democracy in America*, I.2.5.

regime—that it allows instinct to rule supreme. But what else could have been expected? We knew already that knowledge could not possibly be the determining factor, and so if not knowledge then something else. That something else is instinct, or emotion. Tocqueville follows by citing Chancellor Kent's *Commentaries on American Law*, vol. I, p. 273:

> It is probable, in fact, that the most appropriate men to fill these places would have too much reserve in the manners and too much severity in their principles ever to be able to gather the majority of votes at an election that rested on universal suffrage.

The end result is that a candidate must either *actually be* a man formed after the instincts of the mass, or he must be an intelligent and objective man who is willing to degrade himself in such a way that he appears to be so, and in appearing as such is able to win the majority. It is difficult to say which of these two we'd prefer, and it seems to boil down to the situation we find ourselves in at each modern election: a choice between two men of such poor quality that we do not vote *for* the good candidate but rather we inevitably end up voting *against* the one we perceive as more sinister or incompetent. And so, in many ways, we can understand Mencken's frustrations as he prophesied the point of termination for this descending curve: government by morons. As Mencken put it:

> Here is tragedy—and here is America. For the curse of the country, as well of all democracies, is precisely the fact that it treats its best men as enemies. The aim of our society, if it may be said to have an aim, is to iron them out. The ideal American, in the public sense, is a respectable vacuum.[50]

We may also turn here to the always reasonable Aldous Huxley, who reaches similar conclusions:

> In the world of politics, the chances of getting imbecile leaders under an elective system could be considerably reduced by applying to politicians a few of those tests for intellectual, physical and moral fitness which we apply to the candidates for almost every other kind of job. Imagine the outcry if hotelkeepers were to engage servants without demanding a 'character' from their previous employers; or if sea-captains were chosen from homes for inebriates; or if railway companies

[50] "More Tips for Novelists" in the Chicago Tribune (2 May 1926)

> entrusted their trains to locomotive engineers with arterio-sclerosis and prostrate trouble; or if civil servants were appointed and doctors allowed to practice without passing an examination! And yet, where the destinies of whole nations are at stake, we do not hesitate to entrust the direction affairs to men of notoriously bad character; to men sodden with alcohol; to men so old and infirm that thy can't do their work or even understand what it is about; to men without ability or even education.[51]

In the absence of knowledge, emotion rules supreme.

> *"Without a real knowledge of the object we cannot let reason make a judgment. On the other hand, a few external aspects, if perceived, are sufficient to let our emotions react."*
>
> *~ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn*[52]

Kuehnelt-Leddihn's observation is closely related to the problem of propaganda, which is the subject of the next installment in this series. Our comments here, therefore, should be understood as an allusion to arguments that must wait until they can be fully developed in their proper place. Suffice it to say here that a very effective way to get a man to behave irrationally, and to open him in a most degrading way to the power of suggestion, is to pressure him to make a decision that he is not equipped to make. This can be done in various ways—for example either by flattering him into thinking he *is* equipped to make a decision he isn't, or else by instilling him with enough fear that he is driven to express an opinion without respect to its proper formation.

Bertrand de Jouvenel traced the steps leading to this process as well, observing that the Founding Fathers, optimistic humanists that they were, believed that education and rational public discourse could fulfill the requirement of knowledge and thus create a population competent to deal with political questions. While this was perhaps conceivable in the 18th century, it is a far-fetched fantasy in the 21st. If it was possible for the man on the street to grasp the processes—political, economic, or otherwise—that surrounded him in the days

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[51] — Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means*, Chatto and Windus (London), 1937, p. 174.

[52] *Liberty or Equality*, p. 116.

of Thomas Jefferson, it is in no way possible for him to understand them anymore. The information age and universal compulsory education has only added to the complexity of things and highlighted the mental deficiency of the public at large. This has resulted in a new attitude being adopted by the Thomas Jefferson's of today:

> The men of our day, however, being circumspect people, have realized that the cultivation of the electors' intelligence is at least as likely to open a window on the arguments of their opponents as on their own; therefore it is labour lost. The faculty of reason may lie relatively unused in the majority of a people, but there is not a man anywhere who is incapable of emotion. And it is to the emotions, therefore, that appeal must be made.[53]

Thus, we have imposed upon ourselves a regime that enthrones emotion as the driving force of politics by pressing men with questions that they do not have the knowledge to answer. This problem is built into the DNA of democracies in a society so hyper-complex as ours, and this means that propaganda itself is inherent in the democratic regime: it is not an evil inflicted by a group of plotting elites in a dark room, but is a natural product of the system, without which the system could not function, nor could men function within it. Propaganda, then, must be understood if we are to understand ourselves, and we will deal with it in its own section.

[53] Jouvenel, op. cit., p. 273.

CHURCH AND STATE

♦♦♦

General remarks.

> *"The world has heard enough of the so-called rights of man. Let it hear something of the rights of God."*
>
> *~ Pope Leo XIII*[1]

The relationship between Church and State involves two questions: one of power and one of knowledge. From the point of view of the State, it is a question of power and who is subordinate to whom. From the point of view of the Church it is a question of truth, and whose knowledge is closer to the Absolute and must, therefore, be considered superior to the other. The failure to understand these differing points of view is the perennial source of conflict between the two spheres. The Church understands itself as the bridge between the absolute and the relative, between Eternity and Present, between Truth itself and temporal confusion. In this role it clearly sees itself as superior from a logical point of view to all other social bodies *in knowledge*, since it is attached to "the source" while others receive the knowledge thus drawn. The State, on the other hand, which tends to conceive of all social institutions in terms of power, cannot help but be jealous of an authority which claims to hold this directing knowledge. It feels this as a threat to the exercise of its power, whether or not the threat is real, and is perpetually seeking to dethrone the spiritual authorities in such a way that it no longer has to reconcile the exercise of its power with the dictates of their knowledge. It loathes being responsible to a body that is, from its unique point of view, so utterly weak. And so the two social groups, which in the end represent two necessary social functions, tend to exist in tension, although at certain periods throughout history they have, by understanding themselves and their respective functions properly, harmonized in their purposes and achieved the unity dreamed of by St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante. The purpose of this installment in our series is to examine the nature of this relationship. We will also seek to understand the problems that arise

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[1] *Tametsi Futura Prospicientibus*, 13.

when the relationship between the two is denied, destroyed, or inverted. This will lead us not only to questions of religion and politics, but to questions regarding the nature of law and justice itself.

Knowledge and action.

> *"All action that does not proceed from knowledge is lacking in principle and thus is nothing but a vain agitation; likewise, all temporal power that fails to recognize its subordination to the spiritual authority is vain and illusory: separated from its principle, it can only exert itself in a disorderly way and move inexorably to its own ruin."*
>
> *~ Rene Guénon*[2]

To state the question in its simplest form, the Church and the State represent to separate functions, these being *knowledge* and *action*. Understood in this way, it becomes blatantly obvious that there exists between the two a relationship that is not "separate but equal," but rather "hierarchical." This is because human action *must* proceed from knowledge. Knowledge, for rational beings, is the principle of their action in the physical world.

Now clearly one could respond that "action" takes place all the time, through the growth of plant life, for example, that has no origin in thought. This objection can be answered by taking a more comprehensive view of reality.

According to the traditional understanding of the cosmos, all beings are "thoughts" of the Creator, and Creation is the expression through act of the Mind of God. And so, from this point of view, the existence of the world itself has its origin in thought, which is to say in the "knowledge" of God. This is why Christianity says of Christ, the *Logos*, that "through him all things were made." Because Christ is the "Word" of God, he is the mind of God expressed through existence, and hence it can be said that he is "the Lamb of God sacrificed from the beginning of the World." This is the relationship between knowledge and action in terms of the macrocosm.

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[2] *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, p. 28-29.

Man, for his own part, is called a "microcosm," reflecting in himself the structure of the macrocosm. Thus, while brutes (irrational animals) do indeed "act" upon the world in various ways, they do not participate in rationality. The knowledge from which their activity proceeds has its origin in the laws of nature, to which they are passive. Their action has its origin in knowledge, even though it is not their knowledge. That is why plants and animals, although alive and acting, do not reflect the universe in the way that man, who is the "rational animal," contains it within himself.

Human action, if it is properly human, which is to say rational, proceeds from knowledge. Although it is possible for man to act on a brute level, and to go on living on a vegetal level, this is not human action properly speaking. All human action proceeds from knowledge, and this knowledge is found in the human being himself and is not, as was the case with the brute, a passive or "instinctual" participation.

In summary, we can say with Guénon that action without knowledge is not human, but rather an animal type of knowledge. If man does not subordinate his action to knowledge, then his action is disordered. He is acting either irrationally or "non-rationally," and thereby degrades his action to the level of the brute.

The caste system.

> *"The principle of the institution of castes, so completely misunderstood by Westerners, is nothing else but the differing natures of human individuals; it establishes among them a hierarchy the incomprehension of which only brings disorder and confusion…In effect, each man, by reason of his proper nature, is suited to carry out certain definite functions to the exclusion of all others…and thus the social order exactly expresses the hierarchical relationships that result from the nature of the beings themselves."*
>
> *~ Rene Guénon*[3]

The properly ordered social body, because it is a unity of the human order, has a structure that is analogous to that of the human body,

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[3] *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power*, pp. 8-9.

composed of differing parts each contributing in a unique way to form a coherent and harmonious whole. This is why throughout traditional societies we find the various members of the social body, along with their corresponding functions, being symbolically represented by the human body.

The traditional world acknowledged the diversity among human beings. No one was born as a blank slate, capable of performing any task with the same aptitude as his neighbor, as if mankind were a homogenous mass of identical "atoms." The egalitarian outlook has no place in the traditional understanding of society. "Caste" is the result of this anti-egalitarian understanding. It is nothing more than the acknowledgement that men differ in aptitude and inclination, and that these differences correspond to the functional needs of society in such a way that, if they are acknowledged and ordered properly, all men in a society can be assigned a "vocation" that fits their nature and allows them to realize their potential to the greatest degree possible.

This system has its equivalents in all traditional societies, from the Christian Middle Ages to Japan. However, the Hindu caste system in India, because it is the only one with which modern men are vaguely familiar, will be used an example here, although its underlying assumptions and its categories must be understood to be universal amongst the other traditional civilizations. The terms for the Hindu castes (*varnas*) are the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. Returning again to Guénon:

> ...the Brahmins represent essentially the spiritual and intellectual authority; the Kshatriyas, the administrative prerogative comprising both the judicial and the military offices, of which the royal function is simply the highest degree; to the Vaishyas belongs the whole varied range of economic functions in the widest sense of the word, including the agricultural, industrial, commercial and financial functions; as for the Shudras, they carry out the tasks necessary to assure the purely material subsistence of the community.[4]

[4] *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu Doctrines*, pp. 154-155.

If we choose to represent this "social body" symbolically, the Brahmins form the mouth, the Kshatriya the arms, the Vaishya the thighs, the Shudra the feet.[5]

Translating these functional groups into more familiar terms, such as those of the Medieval West, we can speak of the priestly class (Brahmins), the nobility (Kshatriyas), the "third estate" (Vaishyas), and peasantry (Shudras).

While the study of each of these four principal castes would be beneficial for the modern Westerner, our purposes make it necessary to focus on the divergence between the first two only: the priesthood and the nobility, the "Sacerdotum" and "Regnum," or in other words the Spiritual Authority and the Temporal Power. The third and fourth classifications are, after all, subordinate or lesser subdivisions of the nobility.

The Spiritual Authority and the Temporal Power are, as should be clear at this point, the representatives of "knowledge" and "action" respectively, and therefore these are the categories we really ought to have in mind when we are considering problems of "Church and State," even if the latter terms are specific to the modern world.

Spiritual authority and temporal power.

> *"Ineffable providence has thus set before us two goals to aim at: i.e. happiness in this life, which consists in the exercise of our own powers and is figured in the earthly paradise; and happiness in the eternal life, which consists in the enjoyment of the vision of God (to which our own powers cannot raise us except with the help of God's light) and which is signified by the heavenly paradise.*
>
> *Now these two kinds of happiness must be reached by different means, as representing different ends. For we attain the first through the teachings of philosophy, provided that we follow them putting into practice the moral and intellectual virtues; whereas we attain the second through spiritual teachings which transcend human reason,*

[5] *Rig-Veda*, x. 90.

provided that we follow them putting into practice the theological virtues, i.e. faith, hope and charity.

These ends and the means to attain them have been shown to us on the one hand by human reason, which has been entirely revealed to us by the philosophers, and on the other by the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets and sacred writers, through Jesus Christ the son of God, coeternal with him, and through his disciples, has revealed to us the transcendent truth we cannot do without; yet human greed would cast these ends and means aside if men, like horses, prompted to wander by their animal natures, were not held in check "with bit and bridle" on their journey.

It is for this reason that man had need of two guides corresponding to his twofold goal: that is to say the supreme Pontiff, to lead mankind to eternal life in conformity with revealed truth, and the Emperor, to guide mankind to temporal happiness in conformity with the teachings of philosophy...

But the truth concerning this last question should not be taken so literally as to mean that the Roman Prince is not in some sense subject to the Roman Pontiff, since this earthly happiness is in some sense ordered towards immortal happiness.

Let Caesar therefore show that reverence towards Peter which a firstborn son should show his father, so that, illumined by the light of paternal grace, he may the more effectively light up the world, over which he has been placed by Him alone who is ruler over all things spiritual and temporal."

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> *Let Caesar therefore show that reverence towards Peter which a firstborn son should show his father, so that, illumined by the light of paternal grace, he may the more effectively light up the world, over which he has been placed by Him alone who is ruler over all things spiritual and temporal."*
>
> *~ Dante Alighieri*[6]

Dante's words speak for themselves here. In the Western world the relationship between the Spiritual Authority and the Temporal Power has been expressed by that between the King and Roman Pontiff at various times in Europe. Indeed, the very title "pontiff," according to St. Bernard, denotes its function:

> The Pontiff, as indicated by the etymology of his name, is a kind of bridge [*pont*] between God and man.[7]

That is to say, the Pope was to represent the tether between the worldly and the eternal. He was a mediator between heaven and earth, and this is why he was able to christen as well as depose noblemen who failed to acknowledge the proper social order.

The separation of church and state.

> *"Men living together in society are under the power of God no less than individuals are, and society, not less than individuals, owes gratitude to God, who gave it being and maintains it, and whose ever-bounteous goodness enriches it with countless blessings. Since, then, no one is allowed to be remiss in the service due to God, and since the chief duty of all men is to cling to religion in both its teaching and practice—not such religion as they may have a preference for, but the religion which*

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[6] *De Monarchia*, III.16.

[7] *Tractatus de Moribus et Officio Episcoporum*, III, 9.

> *God enjoins, and which certain and most clear marks show to be the only one true religion—it is a public crime to act as though there were no God. So, too, is it a sin in the State not to have care for religion, as a something beyond its scope, or as of no practical benefit; or out of many forms of religion to adopt that one which chimes in with the fancy; for States are bound absolutely to worship God in that way which He has shown to be His will. All who rule, therefore, should hold in honour the holy Name of God, and one of their chief duties must be to favour religion, to protect it . . . . "*
>
> *~ Pope Leo XIII*[8]

The doctrine of the separation of church and state, which is extolled in America by both the religious and non-religious alike, for opposite reasons, is the political result of the victory of the temporal power over the spiritual authority. For there is no such thing as "separate but equal," and once separation by law becomes institutional, then the party responsible for making and maintaining the law immediately rises to supremacy.

In the same Encyclical he cites as reprehensible these views:

> The State (civitas) does not consider itself bound by any kind of duty towards God. Moreover, it believes that it is not obliged to make public profession of any religion; or to inquire which of the very many religions is the only one true; or to prefer one religion to all the rest; or to show to any form of religion special favour; but, on the contrary, is bound to grant equal rights to every creed, so that public order may not be disturbed by any particular form of religious belief.

Again, in his Encyclical *Libertas*, 20 June 1888, he teaches:

> This kind of liberty [liberty of cult], if considered in relation to the State, clearly implies that there is no reason why the State should offer any homage to God, or should desire any public recognition of Him; that no one form of worship is to be preferred to another, but that all stand on an equal footing, no account being taken of the religion of the people, even if they

[8] *Immortale Dei.*

> profess the Catholic faith.... Civil society [civilis societas, quia societas est] must acknowledge God as its Founder and Parent, and must obey and reverence His power and authority. Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness—namely, to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges. Since, then, the profession of one religion is necessary in the State, that religion must be professed which alone is true, and which can be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic States, because the marks of truth are, as it were, engraven upon it.

Likewise, Pius X wrote in his Encyclical *Vehementer nos*, ll February 1906:

> That the State should be separated from the Church is an absolutely false and most pernicious thesis. For first, since it is based on the principle that religion should be of no concern to the State, it does a grave injury to God, He Who is the founder and conserver of human society no less than He is of individual men, for which reason He should be worshipped not only privately but also publicly.

Protestantism and secularism.

> *"If the human race were not condemned to see things reversely, it would select for its counsellors theologians amongst the generality of men, and the mystics among theologians, and amongst the mystics, those who have lived a life most apart from business and the world. Among the persons whom I know, and I know many, the only ones in whom I have recognised an unshaken common sense, and a prodigious sagacity, and an amazing aptitude to give a practical and prudent solution to the most difficult problems, and to discover a means of escape in the most trying circumstances, are those who have lived a contemplative and retired life; and, on the contrary, I have not yet discovered, and I do not expect ever to discover, one of those who are called men of business, despisers of all spiritual, and, above all, divine*

> *speculations, who would be capable of understanding any business."*
>
> *~ Juan Donoso Cortes*[9]

Take the words of Cortes, which represent the old view of knowledge which taught that those men closest to the absolute would obviously be the most discerning in any order, and compare this with Luther's view:

> ...you have people under you and you wish to know what to do. It is not Christ you are to question concerning the matter but the law of your country...Between the Christian and the ruler, a profound separation must be made...Assuredly, a prince can be a Christian, but it is not as a Christian that he ought to govern. As a ruler, he is not called a Christian, but a prince. The man is a Christian, but his function does not concern his religion...Though they are found in the man, the two states or functions are perfectly marked off, one from the other, and really opposed.[10]

And so, in the fashion of Luther, men like Jefferson could learn to see any priest who walked outside the church doors as a trespasser, useless in everything except the administration of the sacraments. And because no right-thinking clergymen would ever accept this absurd limitation, anti-clericalism was the result, and Jefferson, along with his comrades, would have to see priests as enemies of thought and freedom:

> In every country and in every age the priest has been hostile to liberty; he is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own. It is error alone that needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself.[11]

Thus, the notion of a beneficial "wall of separation between church and state" has its roots in liberal philosophy, and in fact this idea follows very naturally from its basic premises. So inevitable was this conclusion that we find it rearing its head not only in the political

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[9] Juan Donoso Cortes, *Essays*, 61.

[10] *Luther's Works* (Wiemar Edition) XXXII, pp. 391, 439, 440.

[11] Letter to Horatio G. Spafford, 17 March 1814.

philosophies of John Locke and J.S. Mill, but even from religious reformers such as Martin Luther, whose advice we have cited above.

And while the Catholic Church had warned kings that "through this crown, you become a sharer in our ministry," the secularism of Luther was to become the unconscious *status quo* in all the later liberal-democratic regimes with which Protestantism would form an unhealthy union. In nations built on this philosophy, even those Catholics who wished to participate in public life would have to sacrifice their principles to the liberal altar. Consider the following statements of the Catholic president, John F. Kennedy, which we have mentioned elsewhere but which are worth citing again, and consider how perfectly they mirror the thinking of Luther, while at the same time flatly contradicting the teachings of Kennedy's own Church:

> I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute… I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me…Whatever issue may come before me as president—on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject—I will make my decision…in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates.[12]

Religion and economics.

> *"The Catholic Church, that imperishable handiwork of our All-Merciful God, has for her immediate and natural purpose the saving of souls and securing our happiness in heaven. Yet in regard to things temporal she is the source of benefits as manifold and great as if the chief end of her existence were to ensure the prospering of our earthly life."*
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> *~ Pope Leo XIII*[13]

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[12] *Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association* delivered Sept. 12, 1960.

[13] *Immortale Dei*, 1.

It is common to hear complaints of religious figures such as the Pope making suggestions about economic theory, as today it is assumed that the two spheres have nothing to do with one another. This warrants a comment on the understanding of economic activity and its history, particularly with respect to "origins stories" which go to form modern assumptions about such things. According to the conventional wisdom, money originated in a completely naturalistic fashion—from the ground up, almost like man from ape, based on a purely biological and necessary logic of efficiency. This gives the impression that the transcendent realm of religion is at the opposite end of reality from the science of money. If we ignore Smith's theses, however, which according to contemporary scholars[14] is a reasonable thing to do, we can explore other options that turn this paradigm on its head. For example, we can consider the view that, as readily acknowledged, money was originally in the power of religious authorities. It is well-known that the earliest economic transactions are temple artifacts.

At any rate, even if the economic secularists were correct in their history, the reality is that, as Pope Benedict XVI suggested, *every economic decision has a moral consequence*. Economics is not a science, and while economics are responsible for technical applications, their applications and their approach in general are circumscribed within a moral framework, which is to say they must be circumscribed by the principles of religious truth. Hence, the Catholic Church states with certainty:

> [T]here resides in Us the right and duty to pronounce with supreme authority upon social and economic matters ...Even though economics and moral science employs each its own principles in its own sphere, it is, nevertheless, an error to say that the economic and moral orders are so distinct from and alien to each other that the former depends in no way on the latter.[15]

Liberalism and the privatization of truth.

> *"For the Liberal the spiritual center of gravity was in the individual, and the realm of private opinion and private interests was the ideal world. Hence,*

[14] David Graeber refutes the conventional wisdom very well in his *Debt: the first 5000 years*.

[15] *Quadragesimo Anno*, 41-42.

> *when the Liberal spoke of religion as a purely private matter it was in compliment rather than in derogation. To separate the Church from the State—to keep religion out of politics, was to elevate it to a higher sphere of spiritual values. But today in the democratic world, these values have been reversed. The individual life has lost its spiritual primacy, and it is social life which has now the higher prestige, so that to treat religion as a purely individual and personal matter is to deprive it of actuality and to degrade it to a lower level of value and potency. To keep religion out of public life is to shut it up in a stuffy Victorian back drawing room with the aspidistras and antimacassars, when the streets are full of life and youth. And the result is that the religion of the Church becomes increasingly alienated from real life while democratic society creates a new religion of the street and the forum to take its place."*
>
> *~ Christopher Dawson*[16]

What is observed here by Dawson has also been observed at length by figures such as Alexis de Tocqueville, who said that in liberal democratic regimes religious truth undergoes a transformation in several ways: it becomes a matter of consensus, which is something that happens to all truth in individualistic democracies; it becomes influenced by materialism, since democracy turns men's mind toward the material world overall; and it becomes an oversimplified expression of rationalism and "intuitivism" through which the individual confuses his own prejudices and guesses with "self-evident truths."

The weakness of secular government.

> *"Now a government is secure insofar as it has God for its foundation and His Will for its guide; but this, surely, is not a description of Liberal government. It is, in the Liberal view, the people who rule, and not God; God Himself is a 'constitutional monarch' Whose authority has been totally delegated to the people, and Whose function*

[16] Christopher Dawson, Beyond Politics (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1938).

> *is entirely ceremonial. The Liberal believes in God with the same rhetorical fervor with which he believes in Heaven. The government erected upon such a faith is very little different, in principle, from a government erected upon total disbelief, and whatever its present residue of stability, it is clearly pointed in the direction of Anarchy."*
>
> *~ Seraphim Rose*[17]

What has been said above regarding ambulatory law and divine law is complemented here by the words of Rose. Perhaps the only perspective we need add to the above observation about the self-impoverishment that results from the adoption of liberal principles is that of Donoso Cortes, who added that such societies are not only weakened but plummeted into chaos:

> Liberalism explains the evil and the good, order and disorder, by the various forms of government, all ephemeral and transitory; when, prescinding, on one side, from all social, and, on the other, from all religious, problems, it brings into discussion its political problems as the only ones worthy by their elevation of occupying the statesman, there are no words in any language capable of describing the profound incapacity and radical impotence of this school, not only to solve, but even to enunciate, these awful questions. The Liberal school, enemy at once of the darkness and of the light, has selected I know not what twilight between the luminous and dark regions, between the eternal shades and the divine aurora. Placed in this nameless region, it has aimed at governing without a people and without a God. Extravagant and impossible enterprise! Its days are numbered; for on one side of the horizon appears God, and on the other, the people. No one will be able to say where it is on the tremendous day of battle, when the plain shall be covered with the Catholic and Socialistic phalanxes.[18]

The true end of human society.

> *"It is, however, clear that the end of a multitude gathered together is to live virtuously. For men form a group for the purpose of living well*

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[17] *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age*, part II, ch. 1.

[18] Donoso Cortes, *Essays*, 64.

> *together, a thing which the individual man living alone could not attain, and good life is virtuous life. Therefore, virtuous life is the end for which men gather together…Yet through virtuous living man is further ordained to a higher end, which consists in the enjoyment of God, as we have said above. Consequently, since society must have the same end as the individual man, it is not the ultimate end of an assembled multitude to live virtuously, but through virtuous living to attain to the possession of God."*
>
> *~ St. Thomas Aquinas*[19]

The ultimate purpose of social life is not simply the "good life," but lies beyond this life entirely, within the hereafter. This adds to the list yet another reason why the Spiritual Authority must be considered superior to the Temporal Power, since it directs man toward his ultimate end, while the Temporal Power directs him only to a relative end. This is why St. Thomas says that all human functions have contemplation as their superior end, "so that, when considered properly, they all seem to be in the service of those who contemplate truth."

But even while saying this, it is important to remember that this reasoning is only a *secondary* proof as to the superiority of the Priestly caste over the Nobility. I stress this because today few in the Western world would agree that the ultimate end of society is the vision of God. I want the reader to understand that, even denying this purpose, the supremacy of knowledge over action still remains a fact, and cannot be refuted even if one adopts a purely atheistic point of view.

Symbols of the relationship.

> *"Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain town: and a certain woman named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve?*

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[19] *De Regno*, Bk. I, Ch. 3.

> *Speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things: But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."*
>
> *~ The Gospel of Luke*

The account of Mary and Martha from the Gospel is the most well-known illustration of the "two paths," contemplative and active. Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel, are also symbolic of these two paths. The biblical accounts are instructive in several ways, but the theme is universal in traditional literature.

Merlin, the Druid, and King Arthur represent the same choice between two paths, and identify the hierarchical relationship between the two parties: Merlin has knowledge and acts as Arthur's advisor. Merlin knows all things, even the future, while Arthur has been "chosen" to carry out the plan on the physical plane. St. Thomas himself explicitly refers to the relationship between the Druids and their relationship with their kings when teaching about the proper relationship between royalty and priesthood.

We should also mention the ancient parable of the two men—one blind and one lame. The two form a partnership where the lame man, physically weak but gifted with sight (knowledge), is carried by the blind man who is gifted with physical strength (action). The two are clearly mutually dependent for the exercise of their functions, but it is the lame man who plays the guiding role, and the action of the blind man has its origin in the counsel of the lame man. This is precisely the relationship between the priesthood and the royalty, for while the royalty must depend upon the guidance of the priest, lest he act blindly and in vain, the priest must be protected from disturbance and the vicissitudes of worldly affairs if he is to carry out his function of contemplation and discernment.

Revolt of the aristocracy.

> *"Just as Martha complained about Mary so in every age active persons have complained about contemplatives…I think that worldly-minded critics who find fault with contemplatives should be excused on account of their ignorance…As*

> *certainly as Martha was ignorant of what she was saying when she protested to the Lord, so these people understand little or nothing about the contemplative life."*
>
> *~ The Cloud of Unknowing*[20]

In order to understand the historical process that has led to our current situation, we must return again to the story of Martha and Mary. As the account suggests, the contemplative life, being "beyond" the realm of action, is incomprehensible to those whose vocation does not include that sort of knowledge. Thus, while the higher always, at least in potentiality, includes the lower, the lower does not include the higher. This is why men called to action will always display a tendency to usurp, or at least to ignore, the guidance of those responsible for knowledge. The Temporal Power will always attempt to throw off the so-called chains of the Spiritual Authority, so that it can act according to its own desires. This is the revolt of the aristocracy, and it is the first stage in a chain reaction which leads to the ruin of civilization altogether and ends in a return to barbarism. This chain reaction, which begins when the royalty undermines the priesthood and usurps its role, is called the "regression of the castes."

Regression of the castes.

> *"A progressive shift of power and type of civilization has occurred from one caste to the next since prehistoric times (from sacred leaders, to a warrior aristocracy, to the merchants, and finally, to the serfs)."*
>
> *~ Julius Evola*[21]

Although there are examples of this process (the "regression of the castes") everywhere in history (India and Japan present obvious examples), let us stick to the phenomenon as it has unfolded in Europe, since that civilization is more familiar to Western audiences.

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[20] *Cloud of Unknowing*, Ch. 18-19.

[21] *Revolt Against the Modern World*, p. 327.

King Henry VIII provides for us an excellent example of the first stage of regression where a secular power refuses to acknowledge the authority of the sacred, and then claims the role of the spiritual authority for itself. We must remember, King Henry did not simply break from Rome, but also established a new church—the Church of England—of which he himself was the head.

However, as suggested earlier, the process of revolt cannot stop once it has begun. *This the way of all revolutionary movements*: they cannot be stopped, and they sooner or later boomerang and destroy those who initiated them, repaying their hubris with a self-inflicted and violent death. We are reminded here of Phaethon's attempt to take the reins of his father's chariot which led inexorably to his own demise. And so the regression must continue downward until it can go no further, which is to say, until it propagates through all four castes and levels the structure of human society to the ground.

Once Henry VIII's project was complete, it was only a matter of time before the revolutionary spirit took hold of the next caste in the hierarchy, which was the caste responsible for economic activity. In the economic revolution that was to follow, Henry VIII and the rest of the noble class along with him were to be consumed in the very blaze of rebellion which they themselves ignited. This second stage of regression, the revolution of the "third estate," can be seen in the great revolutions of America and France, and in the increasing power of the merchant and financier classes that came during the Industrial Revolution. Their political ideas, it must be remembered, despised the notion aristocracy above all else.

During this period the validity of royal authority was called into question, and rightfully so, for without spiritual authority above it, it had rendered itself completely illegitimate. The third estate, inspired by the successful rebellion they had just witnessed, rebelled in their own turn. Now the roles of priesthood and nobility became dispersed amongst the populace, and the age of democracy began.

Some might protest at this point that the revolutionary period we are describing was a revolution for the "common man," and a victory not for the wealthy, but for all. This thesis is propaganda plain and simple, for any survey of the events reveal that men lost rights and independence both in France and America (by measure of taxes and forced participation in the perpetual wars that would follow). The democratic era benefitted above all the moneyed classes, for

democracy has always been a machine fueled by dollars more than by ballots.

This era, because ruled by those whose aptitudes are of the economic order, comes to be dominated by economic ideology, profit, trade, and productivity, because such is the ruling mentality of the merchant caste. All considerations, all political discourse, gravitates toward economic considerations. Government is no longer directed by statesmen but by those with the highest economic aptitudes.

Those who are most economically oriented, which is to say, those who can make the most money for themselves or for society at large, become the new aristocracy and gain for themselves the esteem previously reserved for royalty and priesthood. Society becomes a plutocracy.

Morality itself devolves to promote and esteem the virtues of moneymaking and economic success. Society's highest virtues at this point will be "productivity" and "hard work." Western civilization is currently within this stage of regression, as should be clear enough to the contemporary reader, and is moving slowly but surely to the last and final stage of hierarchical disintegration, which has reared its head intermittently but has thus far been only partially successful. Here we refer to the ideology of socialism.

Socialism, the revolution by which the merchant caste self-destructs and is finally overthrown by the laboring classes, brings the regression to its end. Civilization is then leveled to the ground, both figuratively and literally, for socialism even more than democracy is a leveling obsession.

In short, the Middle Ages marks the last "normal" civilization to exist in the west. It fell at the Reformation when the spiritual authority was displaced and exiled. The royal authority, once rendered illegitimate by its own actions, was eventually dismantled by the rising merchant class, leading to the current age of Capitalism. Next the laboring classes, because they sooner or later perceives the illegitimacy of the authority lorded over them by their moneyed masters, revolt in turn, completing the process and bring civilization to a natural end.

Faith and reason placed in opposition.

> *"Reason is directly opposed to faith and one ought to let it be; in believers it should be killed and buried"*
>
> *~ Martin Luther*[22]

Luther's ridiculous statement above can be explained as follows.

An interesting consequence of the rise of rationalism is that it renders anything that cannot be strictly "rationalized" irrational, and what is irrational is not true. Thus, any "supra-rational" truths are no long the highest forms of knowledge, but they cannot be considered knowledge at all. And so the work of Aquinas was, it seems, in vain, as Luther teaches us that:

> You must abandon your reason, know nothing of it, annihilate it completely or you will never enter heaven. You must leave reason to itself, for it is the born enemy of faith…There is nothing so contrary to faith as law and reason. You must conquer them if you would reach beatitude.[23]

Knowledge vs. belief.

> *"To him who feels himself preordained to contemplation and not to belief, all believers are too noisy and obtrusive; he guards against them."*
>
> *~ Friedrich Nietzsche*[24]

Once a proper view of knowledge is destroyed and belief becomes "irrational," it also becomes intolerable. Let us pause to comment again on the traditional view of knowledge.

It has been said that when the gods appear to men they always adopt forms that will be comprehensible to the nature of those to whom they appear. This is the distinction—to adopt Catholic terminology—between the "Church teaching" and the "Church taught." Although the Second Vatican Council modified this teaching, adding that the laity does play a role in the development of doctrine, it is clear that

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[22] Erlanger Ausgabe, XLIV, 158.

[23] Tischreden. Weimarer Ausgabe, VI, 6718.

[24] *Beyond Good and Evil*, 112.

their participation is largely, if not wholly, unconscious. They participate as members of an unerring collectivity:

> The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office. It spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give hour to His name (cf. Heb. 13,5). The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. Jn 2,20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of the faith which characterizes the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when "from the bishops down to the last member of the laity," it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.[25]

When the connection between belief and knowledge is severed and associations, churches, and entire religions are based on nothing but beliefs held in common, which is to say, a religion of consensus rather than of doctrine, then religion becomes what is more properly termed "superstition," which is a "belief" for which there is no longer anyone who understands the reason. When this occurs, the mob of "believers" tends to become assertive and obnoxious, and we can begin to understand Nietzsche's complaint. In fact, we can understand most of Nietzsche's complaints if we allow that he was observing a decadent Christianity—one which had, by rejecting the notion of Spiritual Authority, severed its own spiritual jugular. Nietzsche watched it in disgust as it writhed in its death throws, having become a "faith without knowledge," or as was said earlier, a superstition.

This is the inevitable situation once the caste responsible for knowledge is functional destroyed. Then only ignorance and a sort of "zombie Christianity," dead but still walking, can remain.

The essence of barbarism.

"Leveling is the barbarian's substitute for order."

~ Nicolas Gomez-Davila

"Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians."

~ Japanese anti-Western slogan

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[25] *Lumen Gentium,* 12.

To call a people "barbaric" is to describe the state of its soul, condemning its mentality or philosophy as one of godlessness. The insult may have nothing at all to do with superficial material conditions such as technological development. A rich man can be a barbarian as easily as anyone else.

The Japanese traditionalists expressed just this when they made their anti-western slogan: sonnō jōi or "revere the emperor, expel the barbarians." By barbarians they referred to the Western powers with their extravagant wealth, their vulgar manners, their secular governments, and their materialistic attitudes. In this slogan they not only sought a rejection of these "barbarian" ideals, but also a return to proper spiritual hierarchy, headed by a divine emperor. However, once the flood gates were rammed open by American battleships in 1853 and the forcible modernization of Japan was commenced, a new slogan was created: fukoku kyōhei or "enrich the country, strengthen the military."

The depth of the transformation is evident. Reverence for spiritual authority is dropped in favor of "enrichment," while the growth of a "military"—sheer technological power—is adopted in place of a traditional warrior class. This "barbarian" evolution has also been condemned by another word, "infidel," which means precisely the same thing. Infidel, in Islam, does not refer to Christian or Jew or even to Hindu. Islam considers all these "people of the Book" and calls the revelations they received valid. Infidel is reserved for "unbelievers"—for the godless. Thus, when Islamic extremists call Westerners infidels, the term has nothing to do with religion, but rather the absence of it.

In response, we Americans call our accusers "religious extremists," which is a term the modern world has created for anyone who does anything in the name of God. We use it within our own borders against Christians who reject abortion and homosexuality. Soon, no doubt, the term "religious extremist" will come to mean anyone who expresses any spiritual sentiment at all, which is to say, anyone who is not a barbarian.

Rationalism and the invention of religion.

"Embedded in the Enlightenment's (re-)definition and elevation of reason is the creation and subjection of an irrational counterpart: along with the emergence of reason as both the instrument

> *and essence of human achievement, the irrational came to be defined primarily in opposition to what such thinkers saw as the truths of their own distinctive historical epoch. If they were the voices of modernity, freedom, liberation, happiness, reason, nobility, and even natural passion, the irrational was all that came before: tyranny, servility to dogma, self-abnegation, superstition, and false religion. Thus the irrational came to mean the domination of religion in the historical period that preceded it."*
>
> *~ Roxanne Euben*[26]

As strange as it sounds, the concept of religion as it has been handed down to us is itself a creation of the modern world. When civilizations were ordered on the basis of action informed by knowledge, which is to say, where the superiority of knowledge to action was acknowledged in the social structure itself, there was no question of "religion" as a separate entity, muscling its way in against other entities vying for power in the social sphere. The traditional world saw reality itself, at all levels, as a sacred experience. There was no level of activity that was not permeated by some higher significance. Everything was connected in a concentric circles, at the center of which sat transcendence, and this is why even crafts such as saddle-making had "theologies" and "initiations" for guild members only. These practices sprung from their perception of reality and not from the dictates of a religious power imposing them where they did not belong. For men of this mentality, there was no such thing as "spiritual life" vs. "ordinary life," with the two cleanly separated into a dichotomy.

With the Enlightenment and the rise of Rationalism, that was all to change. Descartes rationalism is itself based on a mind-body dichotomy, or if not based on it, its practical effects were centered on this either/or. Once this doctrine of division was introduced into philosophy and then to the people, it is easy to understand that any practices, principles, or persons who are concerned with immaterial

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[26] Roxanne L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 34.

realities such as the soul would be relegated into the "mind" sphere and away from the realm of the body.

This was in line with the rationalist outlook but it was also very convenient for Enlightenment propaganda. The Enlightenment needed its own "founding mythology" in order to justify itself to itself and to future generations. Because the pride of the Enlightenment was its being "rational," it clearly required an irrational "other" which it could claim to have conquered: this is religion. And so, the rationalists did not conquer religion so much as they re-structured the modern man's view of the world in such a way that religion would be compartmentalized and rendered impotent. In this way, religion, as imagined in the modern world, is a child of rationalist propaganda.

Eternal law.

> *"Eternal law is the plan of government in the Chief Governor, all the plans of government in the inferior governors must be derived from the eternal law. But these plans of inferior governors are all other laws besides the eternal law. Therefore all laws, in so far as they partake of right reason, are derived from the eternal law. Hence Augustine says (De Lib. Arb. i, 6) that 'in temporal law there is nothing just and lawful, but what man has drawn from the eternal law.'...*
>
> *"Human law has the nature of law in so far as it partakes of right reason; and it is clear that, in this respect, it is derived from the eternal law. But in so far as it deviates from reason, it is called an unjust law, and has the nature, not of law but of violence.*
>
> *~ St. Thomas Aquinas*[27]

When the various humanisms of the Enlightenment era made man the measure of reality, they also reduced law itself to an expression of man's opinion; and where it was not man's opinion that made the law, it was a disfigured form of "natural" law that degraded man by

[27] *ST*, I-II, q. 93, a. 3.

equating his laws with those of biology. Before all these transformations, there was Divine Law.

Divine law was the legal superstructure of all other forms of justice. All other levels of justice, all other types of law, had to make reference to divine law in order to remain legitimate, in order not to deteriorate into nothing more than a "form of violence."

Because in the traditional world it was taken for granted that eternal law was the "given" standard to which human law must conform, any ruler, in order to remain legitimate, had to at least pretend that his law was derived from the divine one. He may have been able to abuse his power, but he could only go so far. He had built-in accountability. This is the primary difference between divine sovereignty and popular sovereignty—that while the former makes absolutism impossible, the latter is by nature absolutist, since it answers to nothing but itself.

Divine sovereignty.

> *"[P]opular sovereignty may give birth to a more formidable despotism than divine sovereignty. For a tyrant, whether he be one or many, who has, by hypothesis, successfully usurped one or the other sovereignty, cannot avail himself of the Divine Will, which shows itself to men under the forms of a Law Eternal, to command whatever he pleases. Whereas the popular will has no natural stability but is changeable; so far from being tied to a law, its voice may be heard in laws which change and succeed each other. So that a usurping Power has, in such a case, more elbow-room; it enjoys more liberty, and its liberty is the name of arbitrary power."*
>
> *~ Bertrand de Jouvenel*[28]

The stock argument has been that divine sovereignty has the effect of fueling the growth of arbitrary power. Yet in its place today's popular governments, if indeed we accept for a moment that they

[28] Jouvenel, *On Power,* p. 47.

really are popular, make the law follow the "general will," and the general will is the very definition of arbitrariness.

In trying to escape the limited arbitrariness of the king—limited because answerable to a transcendent standard—the modern world has enshrined a sort of collective arbitrariness that is far more powerful since the collective, unlike the king under divine sovereignty, answers to no higher law than the consensus it finds among its members. This, according to Jouvenel, is the weakness of popular sovereignty—that is answers to nothing but itself and is therefore absolute:

> For a Power which lays down the good and the just is, whatever form it takes, absolute in a quite different way from one which takes the good and the just as it finds them already laid down by a supernatural authority. A Power which regulates human behaviour according to its own notions of social utility is absolute in a quite different way from one whose subjects have had their actions prescribed for them by God. And here we glimpse the fact that the denial of a divine lawgiving and the establishment of a human lawgiving are the most prodigious strides which society can take towards a truly absolute Power. So long as a supernatural origin was ascribed to law, this step remained untaken…All the great civilizations were formed in the framework of a divine law given to society, a law which even the strongest will of all, that of the wielders of Power, was powerless to shatter or replace.[29]

Religion and egalitarianism cannot co-exist.

"Hierarchies are heavenly. In hell, all are equal."

~ Nicolas Gomez-Davila[30]

"In Hell there is Democracy, in Heaven there is a Kingdom."

~ St. John of Kronstadt

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[29] Jouvenel, *On Power*, pp. 220-221.

[30] Davila, 2013 edition, p. 203.

Hierarchy is the reflection, not only of earthly reality, which is never egalitarian, but also of the celestial order, which is, after all, a *kingdom*.

Many of the prejudices against traditional social structures stem from the modern mania for equality at all costs. Egalitarian systems cannot allow a vertical dimension to exist, and so they are by nature antagonistic to religious principles.

All religion implies transcendence, which implies a vertical dimension, which in turn implies hierarchy. Egalitarian democracy (and socialism, for that matter) denies this dimension, only allowing for differences to exist on a "horizontal" plain. Men can be "different" but they must always be "equal" from a hierarchical perspective. Anything else is repugnant to the egalitarian mind, which abhors vertical diversity, whatever it may preach about diversity in other respects. Religion and egalitarianism are therefore mutually exclusive, although this does not prevent the mass of individuals from attempting to entertain and apply both at the same time. Such is the primary source of what is called "cognitive dissonance" in our contemporaries.

Egalitarianism and caste.

"Every non-hierarchical society splits in two."

~ Nicolas Gomez-Davila[31]

We can also point out another major contradiction that should be obvious by now but which, due to the willful blindness of the disciples of modernity, is rarely acknowledged. I am speaking of the fact that the "form" of the caste has not ceased to exist, but has only been reduced in its complexity, and the chasm between its groups widened tenfold. While the castes of India were four, and within those four susceptible to indefinite subdivision, the one that came to replace it and which rules the lives of men today has only two: those who own, and those who do not. This is not a Marxist doctrine, but a commonsense doctrine apparent to anyone who takes an honest look at the present situation. All of the complaints about "inequality" are legitimate, even if those who speak of such things have no idea what the real cause of the inequality might be. They imagine that problem is hierarchy, and that the solution is greater equality. It

[31] Davila, 2013 edition, p. 169.

does not occur to them, because they have been too long imbued with egalitarian propaganda, that it was the desire for equality which brought about this disaster, and that a functionally organized social hierarchy is the only solution for the vast inequality and concomitant injustice that offends them.

Orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

> *"I am becoming orthodox because I have come, rightly or wrongly, after stretching my brain till it bursts, to the old belief that heresy is worse even than sin. An error is more menacing than a crime, for an error begets crimes..."*
>
> *~ G.K. Chesterton*[32]

Perhaps the reason religion has come to be so despised is because it has been reduced to two things: behavioral standards and emotional comforts. That is to say, it has been reduced to moralism and sentimentality, or at least the sort of religion with which our American churches and religious political activities acquaints us seems to fit this bill. So used to this are we that it is difficult to imagine what else religion could or ought to provide besides judgments about sinful behavior and the comfort that comes from "being saved." But there was once something more, and this missing piece is what is signified by the term "orthodoxy." Orthodoxy is the body of religious truth, be that Scripture or Tradition. It is a supra-moral standard, in the sense that morality can be drawn from it but is not its essence; it is also beyond sentimentality because its purpose has nothing to do with emotional comfort or acceptability.

A civilization loses orthodoxy when it begins to say "I'm spiritual but not religious," or, what's worse, "Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship!" Neither of these statements is capable of comprehending Chesterton's realization: that there is an evil *worse even than sin*. This evil is embodied in the concept of heresy, which is as foreign to modern society as orthodoxy. This makes perfect sense because the two imply each other and make no sense in isolation. Departure from orthodoxy is heresy, and the absence of heresy is adherence to orthodoxy. Both of these refer to the *truth* of the doctrine held by the believers. It concerns knowledge in its purest form. The loss of orthodoxy and heresy together, therefore,

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[32] G.K. Chesterton, "The Diabolist," *Tremendous Trifles*.

also implies the loss of a society's concern for knowledge of this order. Such a civilization has descended along the path indicated in the famous Taoist passage:

> When the Way is lost, there comes goodness, when goodness is lost, there comes morality.[33]

When Protestantism rejected the concept of orthodoxy, which was necessary for its insistence on private interpretation, it predestined itself to descend into the "vague mist of platitudes" that C.S. Lewis warned against. Now it is no wonder the people loathe its presence in their midst. They see it for what it is: a set of shallow conventions adopted to get a set of superficial emotional comforts. In the ages of orthodoxy these had always been secondary products, derivations from the *truth* that was the only truly inviolable thing. Disconnected, they become ends in themselves, pleasant to easily satisfied minds, but slowly losing their appeal to the many.

Slouching toward mediocrity.

> *"A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days. The Western world has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, each government, each political party and of course in the United Nations. Such a decline in courage is particularly noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite, causing an impression of loss of courage by the entire society. Of course there are many courageous individuals but they have no determining influence on public life…Should one point out that from ancient times decline in courage has been considered the beginning of the end?"*
>
> *~ Aleksander Solzhenitsyn*[34]

St. Thomas characterized democracy as the worst of the good regimes, but the best of the worst. In other words, democracy only has great merit if you place it in the context of tyranny and chaos. If

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[33] *Tao Te Ching*, ch. 38.

[34] Harvard Commencement Address delivered on June 8, 1978.

a regime were going to go bad, it would be better if it were a democracy, because democracy, for better or worse, hovers around mediocrity. But for this same reason democracy limits itself, if it is good, to being only slightly good. The floor its nature sets is also a ceiling. This is why St. Thomas ultimately chose monarchy as the best form of government. St. Thomas was not a pessimist. He did not build his philosophy in an effort to escape the possibility of evil, but to offer the possibilities of greatness.

That is the fundamental difference between the democrat and the monarchist: that they both know that the evil monarch poses a greater threat than the evil democrat, but the latter believes that it is worth the risk because of the possibilities for greatness that monarchy opens before society. The horizons for a monarchy are automatically more extended in both directions. When offered the choice between the dual possibility of greatness and evil, on the one hand, and the assurance of a comfortable mediocrity on the other, the man who chooses the first is the monarchist and the man who chooses the security of mediocrity is the democrat.

When God created the angels he knew that this implied the possibility of devils. He thought it worth the risk. In the act of Creation, God, the cosmic monarch, showed man the path of courage. Modern man chooses instead the path of cowardice. If God had been a democrat, he'd have created very little. He certainly wouldn't have created man. He'd have stopped at the creation of vegetable life, and perhaps a few low animal species: for here he could have been guaranteed a comfortable mediocrity, for animals cannot become devils. But this was not the way of the Creator: he wanted saints, and if he had to suffer death on the cross at the hands of a few devils, he'd suffer it. This was the way of courage—the way of the King. "Power corrupts!" the democrat shouts. "So be it," replies the Creator as He gives him the gift of power. Saints he would have, and devils too, but devils for the sake of the saints. The democrat chooses to have neither (and in fact he has neither heretic nor martyr in his regime), and he pats himself on the back for achieving this comfortable mediocrity where none can rise or fall, and where every horizon is dictated by cowardice.

Orthodoxy and heresy die together.

"Liberalism…transgresses all commandments. To be more precise: in the doctrinal order, Liberalism strikes at the very foundations of faith; it is heresy

> *radical and universal, because within it are comprehended all heresies…"*
>
> *~ Fr. Felix Sarda y Salvany*[35]

Heresy, from an etymological standpoint, means nothing more than "to choose for oneself." Obviously, then, the word is entirely appropriate for one who departs from orthodoxy to blaze his own trail. Heresy, then, implies the existence of orthodoxy, which is its counterpart. In the past, every heretic believed himself to be orthodox. The two terms are related to one another, in the same way that "to be inside" of something implies the existence of an "outside." But with Liberalism something altogether new was introduced to man. It was a heresy, to be sure, but for the first time it was a heresy that made no pretenses at orthodoxy. It was, in fact, the first heresy to more or less explicitly reject orthodoxy *as a valid conception*. And because orthodoxy signifies *those beliefs which are true*, to render it invalid is to render incomprehensible the traditional notions about truth and error.

To quote again from Fr. Sarda:

> [Liberalism] repudiates dogma altogether and substitutes opinion, whether that opinion be doctrinal or the negation of doctrine. Consequently, it denies every doctrine in particular. If we were to examine in detail all the doctrines or dogmas which, within the range of Liberalism, have been denied, we would find every Christian dogma in one way or another rejected—from the dogma of the Incarnation to that of Infallibility.[36]

But Fr. Sarda will not leave his analysis incomplete. The explicit denial of the legitimacy of dogma carries with it an implicit affirmation of a "new dogma" which is both universal and negative in its character:

> Nonetheless Liberalism is in itself dogmatic; and it is in the declaration of its own fundamental dogma, the absolute independence of the individual and the social reason, that it denies all Christian dogmas in general. Catholic dogma is the authoritative declaration of revealed truth—or a truth consequent upon Revelation—by its infallibly constituted

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[35] *Liberalism is a Sin*, ch. 3.

[36] *Liberalism is a Sin*, ch. 3.

> exponent. This logically implies the obedient acceptance of the dogma on the part of the individual and of society. Liberalism refuses to acknowledge this rational obedience and denies the authority. It asserts the sovereignty of the individual and social reason and enthrones Rationalism in the seat of authority. It knows no dogma except the dogma of self-assertion. Hence it is heresy, fundamental and radical, the rebellion of the human intellect against God.[37]

The victory of liberalism meant the extinction of the concepts of both heresy *and* orthodoxy, which really represented nothing more than the primordial duality of *truth* and *falsity*. The old positive-negative pair was then replaced with a single, universal negative which rendered the previous paradigm illegitimate and, further, assured that anyone indoctrinated into the negative dogma of liberalism would be completely unable to understand the old terms. Man was left to sit alone in the privacy of his home, asking with Pilate "What is truth?"[38]

Tolerance and the heretic.

> *"Tolerance consists in the firm decision to allow others to scoff at everything that we pretend to love and respect, provided that they do not threaten our worldly comfort. As long as others do not tread on his corns, modern man—liberal, democrat, progressivist—tolerates them to besmirch his soul."*
>
> *~ Nicholas Gomez-Davila*[39]

Religion represents the highest of truths, and so the decision to ignore religion is the decision to subordinate the higher truths to lower ones. One expression of this is an over-zealous belief in the pseudo-principle of *tolerance*, which is passed off as a respect for others, but is really just another kind of materialism.

As Davila suggests, it is a reversal of values and allows disdain to the higher for the sake of peace with respect to the lower orders of life. But there is also a reverse side of this principle of "tolerance" and it

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[37] Ibid.

[38] John 18:38.

[39] Davila, 2013 edition, p. 149.

is that it cannot be tolerant. Or, to say it another way, tolerance can only tolerate a void. Its only guiding principle is that no one claim to have a principle or at least that no one claim their principle be true.

The result is a censorship of such an extreme degree that anyone who believes in any kind of absolute truth perceives themselves as some sort of persecuted minority. We shall discuss this below.

Persecution myth and persecution mania.

When opinion is ordained the measure of law in society, then every individual whose opinion does not align with current law imagines himself to be (and in fact is) a persecuted minority.

The notion that the general will, which is to say the general opinion, rules the day and is the engine of law in society, imbues the popular mind with a pronounced sense of inclusion or exclusion depending upon whether or not their opinion falls in-line with that of the majority in the most recent election. Said another way, by defining justice in terms of opinion, it becomes impossible to explain to the individual whose opinion is in the minority that he is justly ruled by the opinions of others. He cannot accept the fact that opinion is the standard of law, but that it happens to be his neighbor's opinion and not his. And so no matter how deeply he believes in democracy, he feels oppressed when it becomes obvious that the general will is not his, and is therefore not as general as it was explained in theory.

The result is that every time the political process does not conform to the will of an individual he feels that injustice has been done. Even if he is only one of six million other voters, he expects to feel at least that the election went 1/6,000,000th his way. But it didn't go his way at all. In short: he feels persecuted. He feels what every losing party expresses in every modern election.

When law is tied to an objective standard of justice, then the man who gives his input on the matter knows that, whatever his own opinion, the standard is outside of him and that he cannot change it. If he votes, he attempts to vote in favor of an objective and external truth. It is not his opinion, nor is it the opinion of the majority that determines justice in this case, and even if the man loses he may feel that an offense to justice has been committed, but not that it was offense against him personally. He may condemn the political process, but he will not feel it necessary to play the martyr.

Today everyone plays the martyr. Every party, politician, and voter plays the martyr. Even the Christians, who should know a bit about martyrdom, play the martyrs in the petulant game of opinionation. Who can really blame them, though? Once you've adopted the premise of popular sovereignty there is no other possible way that things can end. Anything short of complete consensus creates a persecution mania. That's why gay couples and anti-gay religious groups can carry out demonstrations on the same street at the same time, both crying "persecution!" And they're right.

Law becomes subjective and ambulatory.

"The end of political Power is to realize the Law."

~ Leon Duguit

Such was the opinion of the political philosophers of old. Today, whatever the rhetoric, there is no such thing as law, in an objective sense. There is only the will of the majority, and the law is a reflection of this will. It is nothing of itself, but changes as the will changes, and there is no political principle to be found which suggests to us that this will adheres to or makes any effort to discover such an objective rule.

This process destabilizes the whole system:

> The life of democracies has been marked by a growth in the precariousness of laws…anything that might have checked the immediate translation into law of whatever opinion was in vogue, have everywhere been swept aside or rendered powerless. The law is no longer like some higher necessity presiding over the life of the country: it has become the expression of the passions of the moment.[40]

By attaching the process of legislation to a machinery so fickle as the majority will, democracies develop what can be called "ambulatory law"—a form of law that never stands still, never proceeds along the straight course, but is constantly shifting, reversing, and at war with itself. The Middle Ages knew nothing of this difficulty; for them the law was fixed, the rule a premise. But from the time that the divine law was rejected as superstition, and custom as a mere routine, the

[40] Jouvenel, op. cit., p. 236.

law had to be *made*. And so we end where Jouvenel predicted, with a deluge of fictional legislation:

> Loud and clear we proclaim it— the mounting flood of modern laws does not create law. What do they mirror, these laws, but the pressure of interests, the fancifulness of opinions, the violence of passions? When they are the work of a Power which has become, with its every growth, more enervated by the strife of factions, their confusion makes them ludicrous. When they issue from a Power which is in the grip of one brutal hand, their planned iniquity makes them hateful. The only respect which they either get or deserve is that which force procures them. Being founded on a conception of society which is both false and deadly, they are anti-social.[41]

James Madison himself saw this coming, but because the cause lay in his own principles, he could only lament the inevitable effect:

> The internal effects of a mutable policy are still more calamitous. It poisons the blessing of liberty itself. It will be of little avail to the people, that the laws are made by men of their own choice, if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood; if they be repealed or revised before they are promulgated, or undergo such incessant changes that no man, who knows what the law is to-day, can guess what it will be to-morrow. Law is defined to be a rule of action; but how can that be a rule, which is little known, and less fixed?[42]

Legalism and social decay.

"Dying societies hoard laws like dying people medicines."

~ Nicolas Gomez-Davila[43]

"Once we suffered from our vices; today we suffer from our laws."

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[41] Ibid., 326.

[42] James Madison, *Federalist Papers*, #62.

[43] Davila, 2013 edition, p. 185.

~ Tacitus[44]

The great aphorist continues: "There are two symmetrical forms of barbarism: that of the nations who have nothing but customs and that of the nations who respect nothing but laws."[45]

Here Davila argues for a cycle of ascent and descent as civilizations approach justice and then descend away from it. For if we examine the most primitive societies, we find that they are ruled mostly by customs. These customs may be good or bad, and to say that a society is ruled mostly by customs is not necessarily to imply that it is unjust. But the point is that these customs are followed as customs, and that for the most part the communities that live according to their dictates do not have a specific, objective, or transcendent standard of justice by which their lives and institutions are measured. They're system is, in this sense, rigid and relatively mindless. It has no room to change or develop according to the vicissitudes of history.

As a people begin to rise from this arrangement, leaders in both worldly and transcendent affairs begin to raise the standard and begin to form a higher notion of justice than pure custom. Again, the customs may be good, but as the culture develops and the intellectual life flourishes, a philosophy emerges that tells these people *why* the customs are just, and enables them to understand those cases where custom may have become unjust. They have moved "beyond custom" and approached objective law. As an example of a civilization which had reached such an apex, we can look at the Middle Ages, where men of Aquinas' quality were developing the most nuanced understanding of justice the world had yet seen. Again, we stress that this did not replace custom, for custom was in many cases a just and stable reality; but they were able to transfigure custom and place it, when it was good, in an overall and objective system of justice, traceable all the way through nature and to eternal principles. In short, they took what was mindless and connected it to the mind of God himself.

Now let us move forward. Over the next half-century we see a severing of this connection between law and the eternal. We see law, or "sovereignty," divorced from the eternal and connected to the popular—to the general will, without any direct reference to the

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[44] *Annals*, iii. 25.

[45] 107

transcendent. The curve, after reaching its apex and the height of its coherence, begins to descend. Immediately law loses the stabilization that objectivity had provided, and begins to multiply. It rises in complexity and, in addition, becomes the sole standard for life. When law was an aspect of the divine, it was possible for it to be reinforced by the various other forces in man's life, such as his personal conscience and his religious sentiments. However, now that law was answerable only to itself it becomes the sole rule of what a man ought to do. This causes law to be multiplied further because those actions which were once governed by the unwritten laws of religion were nullified and then openly transgressed. Legalism ensues, and whatever moral imperative is left out of the written laws is publicly permissible. And so the society that had once risen to the intellectual heights of Thomism descends into the legalistic superficiality of perpetual lawsuits over spilt coffee and wedding cakes.

Soon the old basis of law is forgotten altogether, and the multitude of laws become once again mindless, and the cycle completes itself—from barbarism to barbarism—entering back into custom. Hence Chesterton's saying that "Over-civilization and barbarism are within an inch of each other."[46] This new custom, however, because it is inorganic, cannot pretend, like the customs of old, to be even a precursor to justice.

Marx's opium and American Christianity.

> *"Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."*
>
> *~ Karl Marx*

Karl Marx's immortal jab—that religion is the "opium of the people"—can only be appreciated when placed within a minimum of its original context, which is provided above.

Here Marx was obviously criticizing society more than religion. He did not stand with the New Atheists, who view religion as a disease

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[46] *Illustrated London News*, Sept. 11, 1909.

which, in itself, spawns evil in the world. Instead he suggested that the world has its own evils, and that religion had come to be adopted as a warm blanket in the face of a cold reality. An illusory warmth, to be sure—like a draught of whiskey on a winter night—but the important point is that Marx's condemnation in this instance was not of religion *as such*, but of religion *as an escape from reality*.

For Marx the problem with religion was that it obscured important issues. It held out to the people a false happiness which, if embraced, could obscure the reality of social evils. Such an "illusory happiness" any sane man, atheist or not, would seek to abolish:

> The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.

Taken in this sense, the Marxian diagnosis is pregnant with two implications that are easily overlooked:

First, we are given no reason to believe that the diagnosis applies always and everywhere, but only to a specific case. Religion *may*, under certain conditions, serve the function of an anesthetic; but this is not necessarily the nature of religion itself. In those specific cases, when religion-as-anesthetic becomes the rule, we are to interpret this occurrence as an indication that "soulless conditions" exist in that society. In short, Marx is condemning a diseased society for using religion as a form of escapism.

Second, if we are dealing with a case where a diseased patient is clinging to religion merely in order to delude himself and avoid the reality of his situation, then religion *as it is in that specific case* ought to be abolished, not because it is in itself an evil, but because it is being made use of in a perverse fashion. It is providing a veil behind which an illness is allowed to fester.

It occurs to me that this observation contains a timely insight which, properly applied, would allow us to disentangle the web of chaos, hatred, and confusion that surrounds religion in America. In fact, it allows us to take a somewhat novel position: by adopting the insight of Marx, we can make a case against religion America, while at the same time defending religion in general. The essence of the

argument involves making the distinction between diseased and healthy religion, and resembles the surgical necessity of removing diseased flesh so that new, healthy growth can take its place.

To borrow Marx's words, we will argue against "religion as the illusory happiness of the people" in hopes that, in doing so, we can make room for an authentic religious life in a society for which that sort of life is not currently a possibility.

Because the most obvious symbol of religious expression in society is the church building, we might begin with a few comments on the church itself as an independent, dedicated structure.

As members of the "house church" movement are happy to remind us, the early Christians did not worship in churches—buildings constructed for, ornamented toward, and dedicated to, the celebration of a liturgy. They worshiped in homes, we are told. So far, so good.

We do not find actual "churches" until around the time of Constantine and the Edict of Milan (313 AD). Now, regardless of whether or not you accept the authenticity of Constantine's conversion, or how you interpret its cultural significance, it is undeniable based on archeological research that it was during this period that the church-as-dedicated-structure began to appear.

And so, we can say without much room for debate that the church building represents the ornamentation of a society which has become thoroughly infiltrated by the spirit of the faith. It could not have appeared before this point, which is to say that the church is the "fruit-ion" of the long organic process of conversion, and it implies a preceding period of growth and cultural flowering, nourished by real and deep roots.

Such an architectural phenomenon was entirely appropriate to the Roman Empire of Constantine's period, given its stage of cultural development. The construction of these buildings was *proper* to the society where they appeared.

To this period we might also compare the Europe of the Middle Ages, which was even more completely saturated by the Christian religion, so much so that it has been given the name "Christendom." As with the churches which appeared in the Empire of Constantine, the apex of Christendom gave birth to its own structures which were

completely appropriate to its personality, and these we call cathedrals.

The point of all this is that the architectural expression of religion springs from the religious life of the civilization as a whole. Churches cannot arise before, or persist after, the religious spirit that gives them birth. Just as every church or temple grows up as the ornamentation of a living organism, so it ought to decay and disappear along with the cultural life that sustained it.

According to this interpretation, it is only natural to expect that with the dissolution of Christendom we should no longer see the construction of cathedrals. In fact, insofar as the cathedral persists in the absence of Christendom, it is an anachronism, of interest only to the antiquarian. Left without roots it can only ossify.

This brings us back to our present situation. No modern nation-state is culturally Christian (and this remains true regardless of what proportion of the citizenry professes the Christian religion). Nonetheless, in countries like the United States, we still see the proliferation of church buildings. In fact, we've even seen the emergence of mega-churches—a phenomenon which flies in the face of everything we've said so far.

If the church building was the final manifestation of a vigorously Christian culture, it ought to have been the first thing to disappear when that culture died out. That it did not do so—that churches and even mega-churches continue to rise on our horizon—demands an explanation. If these structures do not owe their existence of a living, religious culture, then what sustains them?—for by all rights they should be dead and gone.

To answer this question we must keep in mind Marx's lesson: that religion under certain conditions can take on an unnatural form of life which has little or nothing to do with its normal purpose. Even dead religion, corpse that it is, may still be propped up in order to comfort or deceive those who will not accept its death, and who wish not to see the reality of a world where *their* god is dead. In such cases, we find the opiate religion.

Utilitarian religion and zombie Christianity.

In order for religion to be distorted and bent to such a purpose, its original end must be obscured.

In our case, this has been achieved by reducing religion to its *use value*. Once a thing is judged merely by its usefulness, it can be made use of for anything. Tocqueville observed long ago that religion in America almost immediately took on a utilitarian guise. Even among the clergy, he reported, virtue was not taught as something holy or beautiful, but as something *useful to oneself*.

Naturally the utilitarian attitude permeated government institutions as well. The common courtroom practice of "swearing in" the witness before hearing testimony is symbolic of the whole phenomenon: here religion—in the form of an oath on the Bible—is utilized in a way that does not imply any confession whatsoever on the part of the government itself regarding the truth value of the text. The book is used purely as a device to manipulate the conscience of the witness. A more spiritually patronizing situation is difficult to imagine, but it shows us to what degree a secular government can enjoy religion, not as good or true, but as useful. "Useful religion" then leads directly to the situation Marx condemned.

Religion is, etymologically, supposed to be a means of reconnecting with reality (*re-legio*). It is therefore a technique to be condoned or condemned based on whether or not it serves that purpose. But if the value of religion is reduced to its *social use*, both from the point of view of the believer and in the eyes of the government, then it becomes impossible to distinguish between uses that are proper and those that aren't. As Marx perceived, religion can be very useful as an anesthetic, rendering society numb to injustice and compliant in the face of oppression. Such a use is, of course, the opposite of that for which religion is intended, but it is comforting to the believer and helpful to the State, and so both parties drink readily from the Dionysian cup.

Under these conditions, religion has ceased to "re-connect" its followers with reality, and instead it distances them from it. Religion becomes anti-religion; Christianity becomes anti-Christ.

What, then, is to be done? Various movements have appeared which, sensing the artificial nature of Christianity as it is, fight others and each other in favor of a particular form which they believe to be the ideal. On the Protestant side, this movement is represented by the migration toward the "house church." At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are vocal Catholics for whom nothing but the Latin Mass will do.

The mentality that these two very different groups share is their insistence on formalism. They each believe that there is a permanent form of religious expression which is "proper" to Christianity, which has presumably been lost in modern times, and which must be re-instituted in order to return Christianity to health.

Neither of these groups seems willing to take into account the full implications of history as a process—one which contains no two moments that are exactly the same. They each deny the uniqueness, not only of person and place, but also of *time itself*.

The idea that each time and place has its own organic idiosyncrasies, occurring in its period and its period alone, is something that they either cannot or will not take acknowledge when formulating their ideals. The "house church" was *proper* Christianity, and that is all its proponents need to consider. It is seductively simple, but extremely shallow. Again, one may say that the Latin Mass was the ideal form, in which case it becomes irrelevant where we are and who we are and when we are—all that matters is that we ought to conform to that simple norm.

Neither of these parties will allow for the possibility that what was a completely natural and appropriate religious phenomenon for the first-century or the medieval Church is no longer either ideal or even proper for 20th-century America. And to force such an alien form onto into the present is an act of violence.

Church, as a social phenomenon, if it is to remain valid and healthy, must ultimately take into account to the world-historical conditions of the people whose souls are to participate in it. At one time it would have truly been an offense against the European soul to demolish one of its Cathedrals; in our day it would be an offense to build one.

And yet we are still faced with the reality of the mega-church, and the thousands of other modern churches that continue to rise out of soil which we have declared sterile. On this point, at least, we can agree with both the traditionalist Catholics and the radical Protestants: these churches are unnatural; they should not be here. What are they?

The optimist might claim that the persistence of church buildings in the modern world is a triumph against the times, proof that the Church is immortal and "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." That is flattering and noble. But it looks to the keen observer

more like playing pretend. More and more isolated from political realities, divorced from the everyday life of the modern world, the church-goer of today tends to leave the sanctuary more naïve than when he entered. If something is happening there, it isn't *re-legio*.

Within the church building itself he engages in strange activities. He volunteers for "ministries"—artificial supplements to the Christian diet, the necessity of which proves how impossible the believer finds it to live a normal Christian life outside the walls of the church. And because these activities are artificial, they tend to be redundant, and because redundant, also tedious. But the supplement must be taken, and new "ministries" must be invented all the time, lest the believer be left with the suspicion that the lifestyle he treasures is not a possibility for him.

This is why, in response to complaint that Christianity is dead in our government, in public life, etc., and we would be inclined to reply: "Yes, it is, but in the Churches themselves it is *un*-dead." Something lives within those walls, but it is unsettling since it is *postmortem*.

The post-Christian West has turned out to involve, not a return to pre-Christian barbarism, but instead an advance to a new kind of strangeness. It is the age of what has been dubbed "Zombie Christianity," where Christianity does not go extinct but rather persists as an untimely abomination. It is really no wonder that Christianity is viewed with suspicion by the outside world.

Toward an organic expression of religious life.

There is no normative form of religious expression, but only that which accords with the doctrine bequeathed to a civilization and proper to the men who are participating in it. The revelation is objective, and if its principles are respected and retained, its secondary adaptations may be culturally numerous. This does not mean that any arrangement can adequately express the faith, for it does not originate in the subjective, but only that any number of arrangements can do so.

The church as a dedicated worship structure is appropriate only to those civilizations whose spiritual capital is such that it brings these out naturally, of its own accord. In secularized times, church buildings become not only artificial but misleading to both believers and non-believers. It is hard enough to discern the reality of our situation without millions of believers, stumbling-drunk on Marx's

opiate-religiosity, arguing to the contrary, congratulating themselves on their 'Christian nation', just because it allows them to go about their secular business with a good conscience.

We ought to recoil in disgust from the rising mega-church because, perceiving the absence of sufficient spiritual capital in our cultural substrate, we sense that its growth is unnatural.

Every church building in America is an anachronism. They ought to please only the antiquarian. To everyone else they should appear strange and even repellent. The fact that they are not recognized as such is evidence, not of some remnant of spiritual vigor, but of an unprecedented capacity for self-deception on the part of the American people.

This is why it would perhaps be the healthiest of possible catastrophes if somehow or another all the churches were razed to the ground. The believer would suffer, to be sure, just as the alcoholic suffers when his bottle is taken from him. But perhaps without his church walls to blind him, the believer would finally have to face with courage the cold discomfort of his world as it is. A spiritual wasteland.

Then and only then could he hope to conquer the real problems that oppress him; only then could he build something real and proper to himself, because only then will he have truly been "re-connected with reality." He will have escaped the religion of Marx and re-discovered the religion of Christ. Perhaps then, by returning to the beginning, he could embark on a path that ends with the construction of a Cathedral. But the point is that whatever he does will be congruous with an actual spiritual reality—and it will be alive with his life.

In sum, we can say that Churches only enter the historical scene after Constantine converted. So it is no exaggeration to say that the political presence of Christianity preceded its architectural presence. This order of things, however, is incomprehensible to an era which imagines that Church buildings can and should exist within society but "outside politics," and that the former will somehow influence the latter by some sort of emanation of righteousness. This is gross naivety. Churches built today are an example, not of spiritual flourishing, but of Christian delusion, an act of imaginary activism and vanity. And we have not even begun

to consider how objectively ugly and devoid of architectural significance they are.

They serve the same function for society at large that the window garden serves for the average man's home: they give him a place to vent his sentiments, while he goes about his business, which is completely incongruous with the garden he loves. Churches are the window gardens of a secular civilization. Anachronistic ornaments to make certain people types feel good, but they only mimic the spirit that gave birth to Christian civilization, and they usually fail to perpetuate it.

THE PHENOMENON OF PROPAGANDA

"The majority prefers expressing stupidities to not expressing any opinion: this gives them the feeling of participation. For this they need simple thoughts, elementary explanations, a "key" that will permit them to take a position, and even ready-made opinions. As most people have the desire and at the same time the incapacity to participate, they are ready to accept a propaganda that will permit them to participate, and which hides their incapacity beneath explanations, judgments, and news, enabling them to satisfy their desire without eliminating their incompetence."

~ Jacques Ellul

"I see men assassinated around me every day. I walk through rooms of the dead, streets of the dead, cities of the dead; men without eyes, men without voices; men with manufactured feelings and standard reactions; men with newspaper brains, television souls and high school ideas."

~ Charles Bukowski

ASPECTS OF PROPAGANDA

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General remarks.

We will begin by citing a letter written by author Dennis Wheatley, which was buried on his estate with the intent that it be discovered and found useful long after his death. It provides insight into the impact of technology on public opinion and the way the arrival of the machine prepared the way for an entirely new mental climate:

> When I was born electricity had been discovered but not yet adapted to practical every-day usage. London had no electric light or telephone system. Wireless, radio recording, broadcasting and gramophones were still unknown, and the petrol engine was still in its infancy. There were no motorcars; on the streets all vehicles were still horse-drawn, and for travelling further afield, the steam train as yet without corridor coaches, was the only means of transport. Liners and warships were generally steam propelled but a great part of the world's sea-borne commerce was still carried in sailing ships; and the idea of travelling by air was as remote and unreal with us as it was with the Romans.
>
> The electric age, having its infancy while I was a schoolboy, reaching maturity during the First World War, and becoming a dominant factor in all our lives from then on, has revolutionised thought wherever it has penetrated.
>
> In the early years of the century the vast majority of the people of Europe and the United States – and even more so those of the less progressive areas of the world – formed their opinions from personal contact with their fellows. The more advanced among them were neither lacking in intelligence or political consciousness, but their attitude towards their rulers was governed in the main by (1) any new laws which affected their personal well-being and (2) the discussion of events at the centres of government – declarations of war, treaties of alliance, court scandals, royal marriages etc. These were often belatedly reported but formed the staple talk wherever men were gathered together; in the towns, in clubs and taverns, in the country, in public halls and inns. Thus, in those days, the 'voice of the

> people' was in fact the consensus of opinion arrived at after a vast number of free debates had taken place at every level of society and in all parts of the country, concerned.
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> This 'voice' was rarely raised; but when it was, rulers had good cause to tremble, and almost invariably, the result was a cessation of repression or a change of government; as the 'voice' was usually pregnant with both justice and commonsense.
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> But the 'voice' was stilled by the coming of the electro-machine age, as the new inventions enabled the professional politicians of all parties to get into direct touch with every community, however remote. First came the electric press, enabling a million or more copies of a newspaper to be run off in a single night – and enormously improved arrangements for distribution. Then came the wireless telegraph – which swiftly developed into radio, with a five times a day news service which, by means of a cheap receiving set, could be picked up in every home. And these were followed by the cinematograph which soon became one of the most insidious weapons for political propaganda.
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> The result was that instead of forming their opinions by quiet thought and reasoned discussion, the bulk of the people took them ready made (from so called 'informed' sources) and, in consequence, in the short space of the first two decades of the 20th century an almost unbelievable change took place in the mental attitude of the masses all over the world. The immense speeding up of means of communication brought the national and international picture so swiftly before them that it filled their thoughts to the exclusion of local conditions and the well-being of their own communities; political ideologies and abstract theories of government usurped in their minds the place which had previously been occupied by the selective prosperity of local industries and the prospects of crops. Worst of all, the masses came under the immediate influence of the political demagogues who labelled themselves as the 'representatives of the people', who held that 'all men being equal' all power should be vested in the majority rather than in the intelligent minority, as had been the case in the past.[1]

Hopefully this text serves as an initial clarification of this section's title, which refers to 'propaganda', and situates it somewhat as a sub-

[1] Dennis Wheatley, *A Letter to Posterity*.

topic of the study of technology and its influence on society. Propaganda is, in this sense, one of the effects of the technological overthrow of traditional modes of thought, and in a sense it *is* the new mode of thought, or at least provides the conditions in which thought now takes place. It is our purpose here to dissect the phenomenon in its various aspects.

Propaganda is one of those caricatured subjects, much like monarchy, that is difficult to talk about today because everyone who hears the term thinks they know what it signifies, while in fact they are acquainted only with a parody of the concept. This confusion is, ironically, often a direct result of propaganda. What I mean is that, while I can't say for sure if the insane know they're insane, I can say that the propagandized do not usually know they are propagandized.

Again, comparing discussions about propaganda to those about monarchy, it is impossible to speak of these concepts to American audiences because their shallow preconceptions have been so thoroughly reinforced, not by study or by experience, but by the pressure of exaggeration and self-congratulatory myth. At this point, any explanation at variance with their expectations is rejected out of hand as counter to "common sense." Just as all Americans believe that every king is necessarily a tyrant, so also is propaganda a thing of the past, discarded because impotent against an enlightened and informed populace.

This is why the term, if it is used at all, is applied to primitive and obvious attempts to further political positions. When we hear "propaganda," we think of cartoons picturing Uncle Sam spanking Hitler, or something of that sort. We see such devices as so blatant and superficial that to call an effort "propaganda" is to classify it as something so apparent that no reasonable adult would take it seriously.

To make matters worse, the term also brings to mind Hollywood representations of "brain washing" and Manchurian Candidate-style conspiracy plots. All of this mocking confusion undermines a proper discussion of propaganda from the start. Any warnings or claims about the dangers associated with it sound to the modern ear like simple-mindedness or paranoia. I hope in what follows to illustrate clearly that the assumption that modern man is exempt from propaganda technique is a very dangerous form of ignorance.

A dangerous situation.

Egalitarian society asks much of the men within it; so much in fact that it is difficult to imagine any group of individuals capable of answering the call with success. It is no insult to admit that a single person is not capable of achieving competence on very many matters. This is due to a variety of factors such as time, desire, and aptitude. After all, the names on a ballot really represent a range of very complex questions, and very few men have the time required to understand and answer those questions properly before they enter the voting booth. Of those who do have the time, how many have the desire to carry out their so-called *due diligence*? And of the remaining number who have both the time and the desire, how many of these still lack the proper aptitude for this type of study? Few indeed will be left able to reach the level of knowledge that we could honestly describe as *competent*.

This creates a dangerous environment from the outset, because it is everywhere suggested to men that they must express opinions regardless of whether they are properly equipped to do so, regardless of whether they even have opinions about a given issue, and even though some of them may have never even cared to think about the matter before. (And in most cases, it is entirely proper that they have never thought about the matter, for a wise man does not attempt to generate opinions on everything under the sun, and particularly on those matters which fall outside of his range of competence and therefore do not concern him).

Democratic civilization goes even to the point of imputing a sort of negligence on to those who, perhaps out of an honest humility, choose not to express their ignorance on the ballot sheet. I ask the reader: can you sense the extreme peril of such a situation? Masses of men are being herded into ballot boxes and pressed to fill out questionnaires about men they do not know and who, ironically, may be as ill-equipped for the task of governance as themselves. Such conditions do not empower the people, but leave them ripe for exploitation.

Deprived of knowledge, pressured into an act of hypocrisy, the voter is often just as likely to answer one way as another. It only takes a nudge to tip the scales and get a vote, and that nudge rarely comes in the form of a rational discourse. The modern election, carried out in this fashion, becomes a large-scale expression of ignorance.

We must proceed, therefore, by asking what, if not knowledge, determines the outcome of the electoral process? Asked another way: what forces influence and direct the mind of the modern democratic man? These are not simple questions, and the subject must be approached from various angles to get a sense of the answer.

Democracy and the need for opinions.

Let us take a step back for a moment and look again at the situation where the average American citizen finds himself. Our existences are, for the most part, banal, and so are our social problems. This does not mean they are not important, but it does mean that they are not as obvious as the problem of Huns descending upon our neighbors or the threat of starvation due to drought. Our problems are at the same time much more complex and much more uninteresting.

Were the difficulties of the day to be stated in the chaotic, confused, and ultimately mundane terms where we actually find them, then no one would take an interest in the news, much less in politics. If some did take an interest, they would not feel very compelled to express an opinion on the matter anymore than they feel compelled to philosophize about the process of photosynthesis occurring in the grass on their front lawn.

In order to induce the citizen to *care enough* to go out and vote, he must be convinced that the workings of politics which often seem beyond his comprehension (because they are) and beyond his control (again, because they are) are worth the time he must spend trying to understand them. This is quite a task. In the words of Hans Delbrück:

> "The experience of thousands of years teaches that the overwhelming majority of peoples does not take sufficient interest in the state to be able to form well-founded opinions concerning either persons or bills to cast its vote accordingly. . . . In most elections, except those of rare popular interests, the party that succeeds through some means or other in hauling a crowd of absolutely indifferent men to the polls is the party that wins. Is it then the people's will that has become manifest through this election? We find ourselves in an evident dilemma. If no parties existed, the vote would be so small that there could be no question of an action of the people. If we have parties, it is

> true, they drag the people onto the stage, but the verdict is pronounced by the powers, who understand how to induce those who have no opinion of their own to vote in the way desired."[2]

Although this runs counter to the present way of understanding the democratic process, it is an accurate depiction of the truth, and it also explains why every news story is sensationalized as much as possible, and why political issues are framed in terms that inevitably threaten the well-being of the average citizen. Otherwise the average citizen would be in the horribly reasonable position of not knowing and not caring. So here we are with a political system organized on the assumption that men want to control their own political processes. When it turns out that really this isn't true of very many people, rather than change the assumption, political parties set about trying to convince the people that they should care, and this always necessitates a distortion of the issues. Nevertheless, and for reasons we will explore below, it always succeeds through propaganda technique in inducing men to become passionate about "the issues."

But there is one serious problem with this success. Having induced the people to care, and care very vehemently, democracy is immediately confronted with the problem of knowledge. Fear and concern have been instilled in the mob, but where shall they find their opinions, which because they never cared they never formed? Clearly these must be manufactured for them, and nothing is more efficient at this process than propaganda. And so we see at this early stage a key feature of propaganda: *it is self-perpetuating*.

Propaganda is self-inflicted based on a need.

Propaganda, once unleashed, creates in society a need for more propaganda. First the *concern* of the citizen is inflamed, and when he finds himself in dire need of opinions and 'answers' to allow him to express this concern, and again propaganda presents itself as the answer. In a way, it is like an addictive drug. This is propaganda in its second stage, and it is this type of 'opinion forming' propaganda that we see and experience most in the present context.

What is most important to understand now is that once this point is reached propaganda is catering to a population of consumers who

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[2] Hans Delbrück, *Government and Will of the People*, trans, by Roy S. MacElwee (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 14.

need it. They need opinions, for only through *opinionating* can the democratic citizen find any semblance of peace. In the post-literate age where books no longer matter, the wellspring of opinion is the apparatus of propaganda. This is why Jacques Ellul wrote:

> "[O]ne cannot reach through propaganda to those who do not need what it offers. The propagandee is by no means just an innocent victim... There is not just a wicked propagandist at work who sets up means to ensnare the innocent citizen. Rather, there is a citizen who craves propaganda from the bottom of his being and a propagandist who responds to this craving."[3]

Individual need.

We have identified an individual need, but this need can be divided into many aspects, each of which exerts incessant pressure, an affliction for which propaganda is the most efficient source of relief. The aspects are as follows:

The citizen of today, more than ever before, takes a very serious interest politics. He feels, at the same time, *responsible* for every event that takes place in the political world and *helpless* to alter these events. This fundamental disharmony—the sense of having responsibility for something that is completely out of one's control—is enough to drive a person mad.

The citizen, by subscribing to the notion that the people rule, and acknowledging that he is one of the people, then feels the pressure that in previous ages only statesmen and kings might have known. This pressure, moreover, is multiplied a hundred times over by the fact that his world is exponentially more complex than what was experienced by the kings of old. The man of today is confronted with unprecedented complexity in his surroundings, combined with unprecedented responsibility for whatever happens, and this creates a constant sense of anguish and alienation from the very political system of which he has been assured that he is a part. His mind buys into the notion of participation, but reality is constantly refuting it. One moment he is flattered and the next he feels reduced to a cog in a machine he knows nothing about and could not hope to influence. He is divided against himself. Like Prometheus, he took possession

[3] *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, p. 121.

of things beyond his state, and his prize is to be torturously consumed by his successes.

As a culminating blow, there is no longer a public religious presence to assure him that God is ultimately the one who will control the fate of the nation. On the contrary, God is a thing for the private space, which is a very small compartment indeed, while the public space is under the direction of his peers, without the bothersome interference of religious dogmatizing. Thus, even religion cannot offer solace when it comes to the problems of daily life.

Confused, overwhelmed, frustrated, the man arrives home from a twelve-hour shift to hear that an election is approaching, and it is up to him to choose wisely, lest the nation be obliterated when the wrong party comes into power. Where is he to turn? We all know the answer. He turns to the television. He watches the news. The news informs him, disturbs him, and then eases his mind by telling him precisely what to think about the matter. He votes accordingly—what choice does he have? The circle is complete. Everything will start over in the morning.

State need.

The individual need is only a part of the story. The modern state also requires propaganda and is dependent on it, although in a different fashion. It is a problem of responsibility to the public, which requires the assent of the public before the state can implement its designs.

Democratic governments depend on the assent of the public in order to govern. Or, in the words of Napoleon: "Power is based on opinion. What is a government not supported by opinion? Nothing." Yet public opinion is irrational, erratic, absent critical faculties, and historically blind. For example, public opinion can in no way formulate long-term foreign policy. Public opinion cannot evaluate a long-term *anything*, especially when there are short term concerns present, are always more obvious. The solution, from the position of those who govern, is clear:

> "...a government that is honest, serious, benevolent, and respects the voter cannot follow public opinion. But it cannot escape it either...Only one solution is possible: as the government cannot follow opinion, opinion must follow the government. One must convince this present, ponderous,

> impassioned mass that the government's decisions are legitimate and good and that its foreign policy is correct."[4]

And so the government must set about manufacturing the consent that it requires in order to do what it must do. In this it has no choice. If any government at any time followed the will of the people, it would be ruined in a week.

Corporate need.

In addition to the individual and the state, which are often mistakenly considered the only two actors in contemporary society, we must speak of the role of corporations, or "Big Business" in the phenomenon of propaganda. We could also describe this third party as the 'money power', although this obscures things a bit since the politicians who compose 'the state' are millionaires and the line between big business and big government is not at all distinct.

The so-called Roaring 20's saw a phenomenal degree of prosperity, which brought to light a problem that had not been faced before. In previous periods normal men and women purchased what they needed. Their shopping was, by and large, practical. With the rise of the affluent society producers were faced with the problem of overproduction. They needed to find a way to convince the public to buy things even when they did not necessarily need them, and to replace clothing, cars, and other devices for reasons other than the fact that the old had been worn out. The world of production required the mentality we now call "consumerism" which buys for a range of reasons that have little or nothing to do with practical need. This period also saw the invention of "planned obsolescence." Cars, at the suggestion of the Freudians, could now be purchased as symbols of sexuality and masculine prowess, and when they died early it did not so much matter because the sex appeal needed to be renewed anyhow.

Paul Mazer of the *Lehman Brothers* stated the problem explicitly:

> "We must shift America from a needs to a desires culture. People must be trained to desire, to want new things even before the old had been entirely consumed. We must shape a new

[4] *Ellul,* ibid.

> mentality in America. Man's desires must overshadow his needs."

And how could this be brought about except by means of propaganda?—or in more familiar terms, by “advertising.” We take advertising for granted but it is nothing other than the most common form of propaganda in a commercialist society such as ours. Every commercial is an attempt to propagandize, and considering the known correlation between sales and advertising budgets, this propaganda has become very effective.

Parties as the collusion between State and Individual.

The three groups that are today dependent on propaganda for their well-being are therefore the citizen, the state, and the corporation. Before moving on, however, we have to understand that although reflex has taught us that this sets them at odds with one another, in the end we find that they often cooperate in the endeavor. No better example of this collusion for the purposes of “reciprocal propagandizing” can be found than the *political party*.

Thomas Jefferson wrote that political parties were an “addiction.” He called them “the last degradation of a free and moral agent,” stating further in his letters that, "If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.”

Unfortunately, today we take them as a given, and even as a public good, and party loyalties are so ingrained that a man will often disdain his family or his religion before he will call into question the infallibility of his party. How can we explain this fanaticism for parties which the Founding Fathers despised? The answer lies in propaganda and the thirst for what it provides.

By their fruits you shall know them. What are the fruits of political parties? They provide answers, “platforms,” slogans, easily comprehensible and even “common sense” paradigms for the most difficult of social problems. They are educational bodies that condense history, current events, and the loftiest of philosophical problems into clichés. Needless to say, the truth rarely survives the operation, but the individual finds comfort. To return again to Ellul:

> “This is the great role propaganda must perform. It must give the people the feeling--which they crave and which satisfies them--'to have wanted what the government is doing, to be

> responsible for its actions, to be involved in defending them and making them succeed, to be 'with it.'"[5]

If we turn now to the problems faced by the individual as a voter, however, we find that the political party is the answer to his prayers. It soothes his feeling of ignorance by teaching him all the answers to the problems of the day, whether or not he knows anything about them in reality. The party provides him with a leader that he can trust, even though he can never know him personally. The party gives him the sense of belonging, and this satisfies him most of all. It seems to escape his awareness completely that he had absolutely nothing to do with the selection of the leader or the formulation of the platform and cannot understand any of the legislation that will result from his vote.

But all these will be elaborated upon as we proceed. For now we need only acknowledge that party fanaticism is the collaboration between the state, which must have an instrument with which to propagandize, and the individual, which must have an instrument with which to propagandize itself.

Corporations participate also by injecting money, which is the lifeblood of all modern politics. This is the collusion between state and business. President Herbert Hoover can here act as our witness, as we cite the words he spoke to a group of public relations men:

> "You have taken over the job of creating desire and have transformed people into constantly moving happiness machines. Machines which have become the key to economic progress."

Propaganda manufactures products for all.

Clearly propaganda is so accepted, despite the fact that it is degrading to the mind, because it meets a need for each group involved. The individual needs certainty, the state needs consent, and corporations need desire. All these things propaganda provides, and provides very effectively.

The myth of the general will.

Let us now probe into the mind of those who live in democratic ages in order to dispel a certain illusion. If we ask how the democrat

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[5] Ibid.

thinks, we notice that he has a very particular set of ideas through which he seeks to understand his world. These ideas are always very simplistic because a democracy requires that its precepts be comprehensible to everyone, even those most averse to rational inquiry. Thus, the democrat takes for granted certain concepts that would be alien in any other time or place. For example, the notion of a homogenous and unified "will of the people" or the "general will."

There is no such thing as a "general will" any more than there is such a thing as an "average intelligence." That is to say, if we really did compute the "average intelligence" of an American, this number would probably not correspond to any actual living Americans. Every individual would be either higher or lower than the average. Likewise, when we speak of a "general will," things become even more absurd, and even if we could somehow compute such a thing, this artificial will would be at variance with all the real ones for the same reason just mentioned.

The problem is complicated further by the fact that men work upon each other's minds and so the two minds working together is not the same thing as two isolated minds added together arithmetically. When we transfer this to a larger scale, we arrive at some frightening observations.

When men combine they become, not a collection of individual and insulated selves, but "mass men." When this happens, the mental reactions of the group do not equal a sort of "average intelligence" of all those present, even though this is what one might expect from a purely mathematical standpoint. On the contrary, because masses tend to de-individuate and feed off of one another, and because this de-individuation must proceed toward a level common to everyone present, it cannot move up toward a level present only in the minority, nor can it approach the "average" intelligence. The only way the group can form their aggregate and come to an agreement is by moving downward toward the mental level of the lowest elements present. This phenomenon is the combined result of logical necessity and human psychology. It represents a condition which can be properly termed the "democratic psychosis."

The mingling of minds on a massive scale produces not a unified "mastermind" that contains all answers to all problems, but rather degrades the group to the condition of the herd.

The Age of Propaganda.

To say that you live in the "information age" is true but inexact. More precision is needed, because the ocean of information in which you are immersed is a very specific kind of information that is delivered to you in a very specific way. If you turn on the news you will never see images and hear words at random, but in a planned order and with a purpose; and the purpose is always *persuasive*. There can never be any such thing as an "objective" news broadcast any more than there could ever be an "objective" advertisement. Objectivity in the human order is as impossible as perfection. Even a program properly categorized as "entertainment" carries a persuasive element in it seeking to win the viewers' attention over other programs of a similar type and tenor. It does this by a variety of appeals, either to the emotions or the intellect. Because not every person uses the intellect, while every person alive uses the emotions, emotion appeal quickly becomes the standard technique used to achieve the goal of persuasion.

The field known as advertising was the true forerunner of modern political discourse, which is but a perversion of traditional political discourse. When men spoke in person to small crowds of their fellow elites who were as educated as they were, the discourse had no choice but to seek a pure intellectual conviction within the listeners. Clear argumentation was a necessity. If a man was going to be dishonest, he had to trick the mind, but even this required him to appeal to it—he could not bypass it altogether. Advertising, on the other hand, seeks to produce a reflex action that will appeal to the intellect only secondarily, if at all.

Needless to say, for the reasons already mentioned, the techniques of advertising eventually proved themselves far more efficient in regard to "persuasion" than those of traditional political discourse. Appeals to the intellect require not only certain levels of education within the person, but also a certain degree of truth must be contained within the "argument" itself. Advertising requires none of this; it only asks that the subject be alive and equipped with certain standard human reactions. Its successes or failures can teach anyone what sort of responses can be expected from various words, colors, situations, images, etc.

Thus, while traditional political discourse favored rhetoric and reason, the modern form of discourse, modeled on advertising, favors a purely pragmatic method which, while based in psychology,

does not achieve its goals by working on the critical faculty. Advances in psychological understanding have also given immense powers to the media planners, as there are stimuli the response to which can now be predicted with a very high degree of certainty. This knowledge about the mind, combined with the machine of dissemination which we call "the media" forms a very finely tuned apparatus which directs itself toward the persuasion of the viewer's mind—and the apparatus never sleeps. It runs at every hour and through the entire year.

Anonymity.

Here I should clarify that I am not suggesting that a certain man, or even a panel of men, sit behind a curtain turning the gears of the great apparatus, engineering responses to certain predefined goals in a humanly calculated program of exploitation and mind control. That is far too simple-minded, although it makes for exciting conspiracy tales. No, this apparatus moves of its own accord, having divorced itself from conscious guidance long ago. If anything it might be described as something guided by man's collective and unconscious will-to-death, and we could even go further and say that it is a result of modern man's "collective possession," but we are getting ahead of ourselves. For now, to return to our point, we should say that man does not simply live in the 'age of information', but rather that he lives in the 'age of propaganda'. The former gives birth to the latter. And let it not be said that propaganda ceases to be propaganda just because the individuals utilizing it are not fully aware of what they are doing. Guénon said truly that,

> "it is not easy to judge the degree of sincerity of those who become the propagators of such ideas, or to know to what extent they fall prey to their own lies and deceive themselves as they deceive others; in fact, in propaganda of this sort, those who play the part of the dupes are often the best instruments, as they bring to the work a conviction that others would have difficulty in simulating, and which is readily contagious."[6]

Propaganda as technique.

Propaganda is nothing more than a term used to describe specific techniques of persuasion which seeks to gain the assent of the human subject while bypassing or overriding his or her rational

[6] Rene Guénon, *Crisis of the Modern World*, p. 71.

faculties. There is nothing in this definition which requires the techniques to be wielded by any particular person, or with explicit knowledge of the nature of the manipulations. Propaganda is in many respects an "impersonal" phenomenon, even if its action always begins with persons. Like an avalanche, or the age-old concept of the *egregore*, propaganda technique can be initiated and nurtured by individuals who are more or less conscious of what they are doing, but at a certain point it becomes disconnected from their conscious direction and takes on a life of its own as a sort of artificial demonic entity, loosed to wreak havoc on its creators just as much as anyone else.

Man as a means.

Even when kept under conscious control, it is important to acknowledge that the kind of mental manipulation that propaganda involves is inherently subhuman. It is therefore to be rejected on every level as a means of achieving one's goals. It does not matter whom the technique of propaganda is applied to, it is unacceptable because it seeks to coerce the will not through the mind but by short-circuiting the mind. It achieves its end by bypassing the consciousness of the person and directing them toward an end of which they are unaware, incapable of understanding, or cannot reasonably resist.

The result is that the human subject is turned into an object, which is to say, into a mere means to an end. According to any morality that acknowledges the freedom of the will and the dignity of the person, this sort of degradation is a crime even to one's enemies. And yet we open ourselves to this daily from many directions.

Make no mistake, every time you turn on the television, every time you watch or hear "the news," know that you are unleashing this technique upon yourself, and be on your guard.

Efficiency.

Propaganda exists due, among other things, to the tendency of modern man to always follow the most efficient means for any goal he sets for himself. This is a reflection of the industrial mentality, of which our industrialized society is but a reflection. I will not say whether or not the industrialization of civilization is a result of this mental transformation, or if the mental transformation is a result of economic industrialization. It is enough to simply say that the two

have grown together, and to conclude that the industrial focus on efficiency without regard to any subtle human factors characterizes modern politics just as much as the production line. The most efficient means will be adopted in an enterprise unless some obstacle is erected to prevent its path, thus effectively rendering it inefficient.

Reduction to simplicity.

One consequence of the "efficient mentality," when applied to communication, is a preference for the reduction of concepts to their most simplistic form. An idea that is difficult, subtle, or multifaceted cannot be easily transmitted to masses of varying dispositions, nor can it be communicated in the almost instantaneous fashion required by the modern lifestyle. Some concept which presupposes familiarity with distant historical factors, for example, is impossible to present to a democratic population. The mass of men may not have the time, and perhaps not even the aptitude, for the required comprehension, and so this renders the effort inefficient in the utmost. How then to proceed? Associations here are central for the propagandist, and so he must appeal to pre-existing mental constructs, as well as universal reflex actions, within his audience. What this means, in short, is that entire subjects must be reduced to agendas, agendas reduced to "platforms," and platforms reduced to mere slogans and catchphrases. Any experience with contemporary politics is enough to see that slogans are a favorite of modern mass man. Consider President Obama's 2008 slogan, "Change we can believe in," which is in every way meaningless if analyzed from a rational point of view, but becomes very powerful if analyzed from a purely emotional standpoint devoid of intellectual meaning. The vague notion of "change" has universal appeal to a nation that is almost always dissatisfied with present circumstance, and the notion of something which we can "believe in" creates in those already predisposed a response akin to "faith," or at least signals to them that this slogan represents not a particular truth, but "truth" in the abstract, which obviously deserves unquestionable loyalty of all. In 2012, Obama's slogan changed simply to "Forward," which, again, is not only meaningless from a rational standpoint, but is actually in direct contradiction to the 2008 slogan. Nonetheless, it prevails on an emotional level regardless of any contradictions it might entail.

Keywords.

Beyond slogans, there has also been developed an array of specific keywords which merely by being invoked can create a desired response. These are such words as *democracy, freedom, equality*. These are terms which, elevated to the status of "values" in and of themselves, give the impression of thought and argument each time they are invoked, yet are completely devoid of meaning if left without qualification and further explanation. For example, one might consider the oft-repeated statement that America's enemies "hate our freedoms." This statement, empty of meaning in itself, has nonetheless proven sufficient to explain to the American people every hostile action by a foreign nation in the last 50 years, perhaps more. Never mind that the statement is really so fluid that it could be applied to any situation and any military action, including those of the United States. For example, the Allies in WWII hated Hitler's freedom to exterminate Jews. Therefore, such statements as "they hate our freedoms," while giving the impression of thought, end up ensuring that there is no thinking involved in the matter. "Freedom," as a haloed concept in the modern civil religion, is to be revered. Any hatred toward freedom is received as if it were hatred toward God. Thus, we see that such slogans really only serve to bypass the mind and create a reflex action of anger and fear, which are very persuasive factors, especially in the absence of reason.

Semantic breakdown.

A variety of observers have noted with frustration the natural outcome of these trends, which is a sort of prevailing "semantic breakdown." What this means is that language is decaying and proper definitions are systematically replaced with sentimental responses. Another way of saying this is that everything becomes slang and slur: certain words which have a valid meaning become impossible to use in their proper sense because they have been "hijacked" by abuse with sufficient frequency to render the original meaning obsolete. The term "liberal" is an excellent example of this. Having originally been used to signify a specific philosophical bent, emphasizing the freedom of individuals, closely linked to humanism and the Enlightenment, the term "liberal" now means nothing more than one of the two American political parties fighting perpetually for control. It may or may not signify any of the actual doctrines of "liberalism" in the historical and philosophical sense. In fact, it cannot be used in this way because it would then apply to conservatives as well, because the two opponents are in fact two

modern branches of the liberal tree, each adhering to the philosophy in a different manner and degree. This means, of course, that conservative also has no objective meaning. Conservative and liberal are not simply relative terms which can only be said to describe two enemy parties whose actual philosophical positions may be here, or there, or nowhere, depending on the year. Thus you will see that you can use such terms if you dare, but you will never be able to use them in their proper sense. The climate of propaganda where you are saturated forbids it, and any attempt to communicate using the intellectual meanings of words will only lead you into frustration and confusion.

Unconsciousness of propaganda.

Always keep in mind that the propagandistic climate is so familiar to your contemporaries, so all-pervasive, that it has ceased to be consciously felt for what it is, and is now as natural as breath. The air indeed would smell stale to them if it were cleared of the propagandistic technique and delivered via pure intellectual appeal. They would find it alien and appalling. See, for example, how many men you can persuade to read Aristotle's *Politics*, and you will quickly understand. Intellectual foundations for arguments cease to be necessary when arguments cease to be intellectual. Emotions do not require a foundation; they only ask to be felt. Again, this all proceeds on a level outside of conscious acknowledgement and your neighbor will all the while deny the existence of the drum even as he dances to its beat.

No more demagogues.

Frequently today we hear so-and-so accused of being a demagogue. This is an important error for us to correct, which we will now do. In the words of Theodor Geiger:

> "The typical leader by no means influences the masses in one direction, he finds the undercurrent and is himself a possessed among the possessed. The typical mass-leader is not a 'demagogue,' he does not consciously and with a cool brain direct the masses in one way, he most of all is gripped by the ecstasy of mass-experience, he is himself among the most unconscious of all." [7]

[7] *Die Masse und Ihre Action*.

The modern political leader is really only the first dupe. He is truly the first among equals amidst a mass of equally ignorant and deluded individuals, whether we are speaking here of a president or a *Fuhrer*. Remember that we are speaking here not of theory or any articulated law as to the "powers" invested here or there, but rather of the actual effective role of such leaders in the flow of political events. Here, with few exceptions, the individual melts into passivity.

The verbal universe.

Quoting Davila again, we can agree with him that: "Daily news is the modern surrogate of experience."

To illustrate this point, I am reminded of an anecdote from Milan Kundera:

> "My grandmother, who lived in a Moravian village, still knew everything through her own experience: how bread is baked, how a house is built, how a pig is slaughtered and the meat smoked, what quilts are made of, what the priest and the schoolteacher think about the world; she met the whole village every day and knew how many murders were committed in the country over the last ten years; she had, so to speak, personal control over reality, and nobody could fool her by maintaining that Moravian agriculture was thriving when people at home had nothing to eat. My Paris neighbor spends his time at an office, where he sits for eight hours facing an office colleague, then he sits in his car and drives home, turns on the TV, and when the announcer informs him that in the latest public opinion poll the majority of Frenchmen voted their country the safest in Europe (I recently read such a report), he is overjoyed and opens a bottle of champagne without ever learning that three thefts and two murders were committed on his street that very day."[8]

This is the result of propaganda, that it plummets men into a purely verbal universe that is completely disconnected from reality. What is constructed within this abstract world begins to guide political development and cultural ethos in such a way that the nation no

[8] Milan Kundera, *Immortality*.

longer makes decisions based on what they see but on what they imagine.

Propaganda does not require unity.

Because propaganda thrives on disorder and confusion within the mob, it does not, as one would assume from watching movies about brainwashing and manipulation, have to be carried out with precise planning and through flawless execution. Remember, propaganda operates through confusion, and through application of stress conditioning it achieves its ends. It does not need a 'plan', because it does not need a planner. There may be a multiplicity of parties and organizations each employing the same means to batter the subject population with conflicting ideas, undermining each other's particular agenda at every turn. No matter. This does not change the nature of the propagandistic climate, for it is not characterized by calculated ends, but by a conflagration of nervous agitation and mental bewilderment, suppressing man's higher faculties in favor of irrational impulse and, more specifically, conditioned reflex.

Exploitation of hate.

Everyone feels hatred, resentment, and anger. This means that there is also in each person a need for an outlet or a means of expressing these emotions that will not result in guilt or negative social consequences. Normally a man must find a way, usually through religious practice and self-discipline, to restrain and diffuse this hatred, or else he will suffer consequences. Not so in the age of propaganda. Propaganda excels in providing men with official enemies, at the same time ensuring that even the most puerile and shameful resentments against "the opposition" are socially sanctioned. Anyone familiar with party systems has seen the disgust one party member is apt to show toward another whom he may really know nothing about other than that he is one of "the enemies." He cannot afford to know much about the person, for then he risks finding some redeeming feature in his enemy, and this is unacceptable. Any redemption for the enemy is a failure for propaganda which seeks separation between individuals; communion is defeat. For such reasons, it matters little what scapegoat is chosen. They need not be powerful or of a different color. The Jews were easily made to serve this purpose by Hitler, so badly does man need someone whom he can hate with impunity.

Dependence.

It has been suggested that the adherents of one party are commanded not to read the literature of other parties because they might find something agreeable in their reading and might therefore change allegiance; but I have found this to be untrue. In the end, the propagandized man becomes dependent on the propaganda, needing it and feeling something akin to fear in its absence. He abstains from all literature not sanctioned by the party authority, not because the authority forbids it, but because he himself fears it. He begins to return daily to the altar of propaganda because he has come to require it as sustenance. In the beginning propaganda may have had to assail him so thoroughly that it became as natural to him as air, but once this acclimation was complete it had to assail him no longer. Having identified it with air, he has come to need it like air, and he feels suffocated in its absence. The human person thus becomes assimilated with propaganda—there may be no turning back.

The moral paintbrush.

Closely linked to the desire to hate is the desire to feel justified in one's own opinions and behavior. Each man wants to be affirmed, wants to be "right," and wants to claim for himself the banner of truth. And this is not a matter of simple theoretical truth, but ultimate truth, which is to say, moral truth. He does not want to be "right" as one is right about a math problem; he wants to be "justified" not only in regard to rational error, but also in regard to sin itself. He wants to be righteous! Here again propaganda is more than happy to accommodate him. As it provides him with an enemy toward which he may express his hatred, so also he is encouraged to impute to this enemy all evils in the world. Every social problem, every human suffering, will be traced in some way to "the enemy," so that nothing remains a simple difference of opinion. Party allegiance becomes an ultimate question—a spiritual question. Philosophical differences become religious differences. It becomes impossible to conceive of two men who seek truth but come to different conclusions. There is only good and evil, and the line is clearly drawn. This process is an immense simplification of the kind carried out by Hitler against the Jews. Great masses of individuals who may themselves vary greatly in character and opinion are grouped indiscriminately into one entity as "the enemy," and all must be despised together as if they were so many limbs of the devil himself. Again, although this does rely on the exploitation of hate,

we have now gone further and are seeing the exploitation of pride. This is not simply a sanctioned resentment of one's neighbor; it is a sanctioned claim to self-righteousness. Who can resist such an offer?

Collective transference.

Another way to look at the previous point is this: there is a technique in psychoanalysis called "transference," whereby the physician seeks to redirect feelings of guilt and self-loathing, which the patient originally aims at himself, in such a way that the patient begins to attribute those feelings to the physicians. By this method the physician "frees" the patient from guilt. The idea is that, while initially this results in the patient loathing the physician, it completes a first necessary step of allowing the patient to love himself, and the physician then seeks to train the patient to properly direct the negative feelings consciously, so that they are aimed at neither himself nor the physician. Propaganda exploits this technique, albeit on a collective scale and without the goal of mental health. Propaganda, by its relentless pulverizations and suggestions, allows the collective to "transfer" its guilt feelings onto a designated enemy, who then carries not only his own sins, but also the sins of the entire society.

Absolutism.

Only in under these sorts of pressures could situations arise where the enemy is always "absolutely evil" and is a creature in whom no redeeming qualities exist; opposed to the enemy is the body of the "affirmed" who are "absolutely good" and who embody all that is good and virtuous in civilization.

Causes and conditions.

Remember we had said that the propagandistic climate resulted from certain ambient conditions without which it could not exist. Here we may briefly enumerate some of those conditions which combine to reinforce or exacerbate the propagandistic climate.

Individualism.

The dispersion of tightly-knit social groups into that of isolated "individuals" allows the mechanisms of propaganda to then regroup them as potent and organic associations, but rather as abstract "teams," thus offering the feeling of camaraderie without the power

or relationship implied in such solidarity. The family must decay so that the company can prosper; the clan must die so that the party can achieve its ends. In truth, propaganda could not operate in societies where the traditional forms of solidarity were central. Peasant and village peoples are impervious to propaganda methods. We can conclude then that widespread individualism and atomization is a pre-condition of propaganda.

Technological depersonalization.

Propaganda presupposes not only the separation of individualism, but also the depersonalization of those around us once we conceive of them as separate and unrelated to ourselves. As technological means become the medium for all communication, discourse itself becomes less human and therefore serves this end with great efficiency. There is no possible way propaganda could exert its force in an organic setting of interpersonal dialogue. Natural face-to-face conversation has both advantages and limitations, but in almost every way it is hostile to propaganda. It implies an inescapable personal contact which excludes the possibility of seeing your "opponent" in the abstract as the devil himself. In such scenarios we cannot help but see the man across from us as a limited human being as susceptible to error and ignorance as anyone else. We find then that he could not possibly be the evil mastermind that we had pictured in our abstract generalizations, and against which we had directed so much disdain. It is even likely, although not guaranteed, that we may sense some likeable quality in the man. Indeed, we may realize, with abject horror, that the man actually harbors a good will! We may be forced to explain his opinions as a matter of ignorance pure and simple, which renders our hatred somewhat impotent, because who can really hate someone seen as good-willed but wrong-headed? At worst we are left with frustration at our inability to meet intellectually, but, having met personally, much of our insanity has been expelled.

Existential insecurity.

As suggested already, the modern man has unprecedented expectations laid at his feet in regard to both discernment and behavior. Never before has the common man been so "free" from guidance from the wisdom of tradition or religion. Never before has he been so privileged as to have a say in all of the most complex political, economic, social, and scientific matters. Having been liberated from all the traditional limitations, he suffers under the

weight of the plethora of new responsibilities which threaten to overwhelm him. Divorced not only from traditional supports, but even from his neighbor, he must discern for himself in every matter. When the perennial problems of existence assail him, he must formulate his own explanations. He knows he is a sinner and feels his own weakness, both physically and mentally, and yet he is deprived of any recourse. He is ripe for propaganda. Propaganda is more than happy to offer him simplistic explanations for the most complex social phenomena. These he must accept because the real explanations are impossibly far removed from his competence, and he must have an explanation!—so he takes the only one that is within his reach, however absurd. It is more honorable in this age to be arrogantly ill-informed than to be honest about one's ignorance. So much for the struggle with his ignorance. And the struggle with his sinfulness?—with the knowledge that he is weak and that there are ever-present evils in the world with which he must struggle? The wings of the church can no longer shelter him. Again, he must find his own solutions. Propaganda is here again, teaching man how to project his own evils onto an abstract opponent, focusing all of his spite on the enemy. He is taught to separate himself from sin, freeing him of his guilt and his need for repentance, which simultaneously frees him from any obligation to deal charitably with his enemies. Propaganda offers him truth and salvation in a terrifying world that denies the existence of both.

Fear and angst.

As Mencken wrote, this creates a vicious circle:

> "Civilization, in fact, grows more maudlin and hysterical; especially under democracy it tends to degenerate into a mere combat of crazes; the whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by an endless series of hobgoblins, most of them imaginary. Wars are no longer waged by the will of superior men, capable of judging dispassionately and intelligently the causes behind them and the effects flowing out of them. They are now begun by first throwing a mob into a panic; they are ended only when it has spent its ferine fury."[9]

[9] H.L. Mencken, *In Defense of Women*, p. 53.

Materialism.

As suggested above, propaganda tends to create a new order of sacred objects. More accurately, for those civilizations where materialism has created a spiritual void, propaganda seeks to populate that void with new concepts, persons, and pseudo-doctrines. This elevation of inferior objects to the status of sacred could obviously never be achieved in the presence of a valid spiritual authority. Thus, propaganda presupposes a practical materialism. Even if the society where it works continues to remain nominally religious, the forces of propaganda will still succeed if the spiritual authority is excluded from the social order. Again, even if the society claims and even theoretically desires religion to remain supreme, if it is excluded from all socio-political matters it becomes, in a practical sense, subordinate. This creates the aforementioned spiritual vacuum which is then easily populated as described. It is a strange irony then that materialism does not eliminate the sacred sphere, but merely displaces it and sweeps it clean before populating it with something else, namely, civil religion. This new faith is just as dogmatic and twice overbearing as any church state, because its members are not tied to any rationally enunciated set of principles. The new order of the sacred is an order of irrationality and tribalism.

Propaganda stops at nothing to give an impression.

In desperate propaganda, no effort is spared to give the impression that no effort will be spared. The fanatics must be convinced. Right now the United States president is deploying troops to the southern border to block the terrifying flood of immigrants that threaten the well-being of (North) Americans. It matters not that illegal immigration is at a 20 year low. He is also still trying to build his "wall" along the border, even though crossings at the border, at least with respect to the drug trade, are decreasing, and crossings at the ports are up. The wall does not, therefore, serve the expressed purpose. It serves a rhetorical or symbolic purpose. So do the troops. The spectacle is all that matters. He is proving to the nation that he is willing to do things, and the things are less important than the willingness.

Atrophy of the critical faculty.

It has been observed that “there is no such thing as a collective critical faculty.” As “man as individual” slowly disintegrates, losing himself to “man as teeming throng,” the less the critical faculty will be able to operate in any way. This is precisely the reason that men

lose themselves during riots. Since the critical faculty can only operate on an individual level, and because the passions once inflamed can only be checked by that very faculty, when men de-individuate within the herd and reason is suppressed, there is nothing left to check the passions. Thus, the same passion, which might have inflicted minimal damage through a man in isolation, becomes violent and catastrophic when that same individual is immersed within the collective. It is not so much that he takes on the passions of others, as you might expect, but that his aptitude for moderation becomes paralyzed, and so he becomes helpless before his very own passions—and that is more than enough.

Resultant predisposition.

When propaganda succeeds, which it always will within mass civilization, it creates in the people certain predispositions. It agitates and ensures that a certain level of tension, short of a riot but only just, will remain constant. Man must never feel at ease, and whether it be awareness of death, injustice, war, natural disaster, political strife, or economic downturn, he must always exist in a state of anxiety. In this way he will maintain the necessary openness to suggestion. When the suggestion comes, it sends him down a path that is wholly predictable and is really now only a matter of reflex. When the signal comes, he knows exactly where to go, what to say, and, most importantly, who the enemy is. Ironically, however, what this usually means is not war or some dramatic act of revolt. It usually means simply that he accepts this candidate or piece of legislation while rejecting the other; that he hates this nation and loves another; that he believes this doctrine while accepting another; all without the exercise of his own reason. He will start no wars. He will not become a radical. He will probably do nothing shocking, nothing that a fully aware and un-propagandized man wouldn't do.

The final product.

Perhaps the only real difference between the man of propaganda and the conscious man is that the former will not do anything in his daily life simply because he has considered the action in its essence—questioned and examined it—and decided that it was best. He will simply do it, and that is all, whether that involves spending his money, voting, shooting a gun, or flaying the flesh off his neighbors back. And to the degree that he just does these things, any of them, to that same degree does he cease to be human. Propaganda is, at its essence, the animalization of man. It manufactures men who are, as

the scientists say, without wills. As a differentiated man, propaganda will perhaps cause you more pain than any other single modern phenomenon. This is not because it will touch you as deeply, since you have a degree of natural immunity (or else you would not be reading this book). No, it will agonize you because it will touch everyone around you, and there will be nothing you can do to overpower it. Set before it the greatest work of philosophy and wisdom—it will be trampled into the dust by a thousand feet marching, chanting meaningless slogans. Produce the most eloquent of speeches!—it will be drowned out by an idiot talking nonsense on the television. Then you will realize one day that communication has become impossible. This will perhaps be the loneliest day of your life. But you must learn to accept it, to transcend it, and to accept the challenge, which is that you must speak in the small places, the secret places, the places where few will hear and none will remember your name. The age of famous philosophers is gone—the philosopher is as dead now as God. But that does not mean you cannot find, here and there, a lover of philosophy. It does not mean that you cannot find, even in the silence that is chaos, communion with God.

Mass media as an apparatus for propaganda.

We can conclude with a note on the press. In short, there is no such thing: there is only the machinery of propaganda. Here as everywhere the laws of subversion have transformed a mechanism designed for truth into one which perpetuates deceit. Here again you must maintain the proper perspective: the information given you by the media will always be useless, even malicious, in the raw form in which it will come to you. Until you work upon it, disseminating its half-truth, its misinterpretation, and its grossly misplaced emphasis, which will inevitably tinge everything which passes through its machinery, it can offer you no sustenance. In fact, the degradation of the press has gone so far that you will have to think long and hard about whether it is even worth the effort to make of it something useful, asking yourself if it is not wiser to discard it completely, as Spengler suggested, writing that:

> "To-day we live so cowed under the bombardment of this intellectual artillery (the media) that hardly anyone can attain to the inward detachment that is required for a clear view of the monstrous drama. The will-to-power operating under a pure democratic disguise has finished off its masterpiece so well that

> the object's sense of freedom is actually flattered by the most thorough-going enslavement that has ever existed."[10]

The media today exists for no other social function than to allow the audience to be informed about everything without understanding anything.

The dregs of standardized language.

By imposing standardization of language, humanity responds by manifesting symptoms of the suppression of certain impulses which must be combated by the standardized society. Blacks and their slang is the closest thing we have to a healthy "dialect" in the United States, but it is despised and viewed as a sign of low intelligence, although the opposite is actually more true: to speak in a purely standardized manner according to a set of contrived, and in the case of the English language, contradictory rules, requires less intelligence and in fact suppresses mental activity. Thus, while certain groups may develop a dialectic, which is natural and human, they are ostracized since, by bucking the system, they are breaking it. All of the characteristics of dialectic (community) and the protections it affords (one cannot propagandize a dialect from outside--and so any manipulations of this kind must be tailored to specific communities, which, due to the nature of propaganda as a mass communication, renders it impotent) could be described as characteristically human; the impulses that give rise to standardization and the vulnerability it creates, on the other hand, are inhuman and anti-human. Standardized language is in the service of economy, which is to say it is imposed to support the industrial society that operates best with a mentally homogenous population.

Fears about artificial intelligence.

The rise of social media platforms and the recent popularization of artificial intelligence software have been enlightening. They have brought us a few steps closer to the movie scenarios where supercomputers rebel against their human creators. Or perhaps, in a similar scenario, android beings who exist as a union of man and machine, come to rule over us. The strange thing is that, in a very real sense, every person who carries a smartphone around all day

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[10] Oswald Spengler, *Decline of the West: Perspectives of World History* (New York: Knopf, 1928), p. 455.

and uses it constantly to communicate and to find answers to life's questions--such a person *is already an android*.

After all, the move android is envisioned as a kind of 'augmented human' who is inseparable from his 'embedded technology' and who possesses powers that exceed normal human capabilities, but which are drawn from his constant access to the computer and its functions. Obviously, today's smartphones are not surgically implanted within the body, but that is a difference that is really superficial and could easily change in the future. Already, many of the people we meet are alive only because they have machines implanted in their bodies to help keep them alive.

We have imagined futures where technology becomes 'self-aware' and manipulates mankind according to its own pragmatic values, which of course means that it kills or enslaves all of us. That reality is beginning to present itself, but in a way that is more disturbing: we subject ourselves to technology. It is a voluntary apocalypse. It is not unlike cases of voluntary possession. We have invited it in, for the sake of certain conveniences or pleasures, and once the bargain is made, it is too difficult to extricate oneself from the subjugation.

Technology becomes manipulative, but this can only be because humanity has become more and more open to manipulation. Man is already degraded into *the subject of technology*, its slave, with a mind paralyzed by stimulation and exposure. It seems more likely that it will not be a breakthrough in AI, but rather the decadence of the human state, a loss of *humanity*, that renders humanity 'extinct'. Man creates the bomb and, in the process, becomes the type of person that uses bombs to blow up his enemies. We change with the technology we use. It is true that technology acts upon us, but it is truer that it requires a certain type of humanity in order to produce certain technologies. The initiative is (or at least was) with us. We congratulate ourselves for creating what does violence to us.

The conclusion is that AI needn't become 'sentient' to subjugate humanity to itself when humanity is already laboring day and night to subjugate itself to technology, staring for hours and days at a screen that rots his brain. Millions work day and night managing machines that churn out parts for more machines. We imagine a god-like computer brain as our future enemy, a super-intelligence that foresees our every move. This is flattery. Would it really require such a formidable adversary?

It turns out that we require no adversary at all, only our own perverse creativity. Technology need not be intelligent—man need only become a little bit more stupid, and the apocalypse is here. For all intents and purposes, mankind is very close to extinct if by mankind we refer to his intelligence, his good taste, and his moral sensibility.

Extinction by artificial intelligence is a projection of fantasy where man's cold rationality, without appreciation for beauty, without love, without discernment, becomes 'autonomous' and pursues its sterile ends not for human dignity but in spite of it. In other words, it is an imaginative externalization of what is already true about our civilization.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

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General remarks.

It could be beneficial to some readers at this stage to provide a minimalistic enumeration of some of the tactics of propaganda. Some have already been mentioned, for example the *moral paintbrush* and the *scapegoat*. Others are simply logical fallacies and are not original to the propagandist but are merely utilized by him on a collective level. Propaganda adopts fallacies and deploys them on a scale never before possible. Thus, we include many logical fallacies *within the context of propaganda*, in addition to describing some of the psychological tactics specific to propaganda itself. The list is obviously not complete, nor could it be, since the reason can err in an almost infinite variety of ways. The intent is merely to allow the reader to begin to recognize some of the most common ploys used to circumvent or undermine his reason.

Ad hominem.

I will mention the ad hominem fallacy first because it is one of the simplest and most popular. We're all familiar with it, if not in theory then at least in practice. It means to argue against the person or 'to the man', and it involves trying to refute an argument by attacking the person who makes it rather than the argument itself.

In popular politics, ad hominem attacks are plentiful, made all the more frequent by the fact that popular politicians are such easy targets for ridicule. Donald Trump, to take a recent example, presented an easy target for outrage due to his antics. Yet, as disagreeable as his personality was to some, it has no bearing on the rightness or wrongness of his policy decisions. And yet policy decisions are complex and the analysis of outcomes takes work. Easier to simply replay an offensive joke made by Trump a hundred times over, and those predisposed to find him repulsive will reject even his most prudent decisions.

That is not to say that personal morality has no bearing on the question of suitability for leadership, but from a rational and even a historical standpoint, there is a distinction between the office and the one who holds it, and the presence of vice in the leader does not

necessarily mean that he will not excel where it matters most. We are not arguing that Donald Trump is an example of this apparent contradiction, but some of America's best presidents have been subject to vice.

Ad nauseam.

There is a common saying, that "you can repeat something as many times as you like, but that won't make it true." But a well-oiled propaganda machine makes repetition the measure of true, and we find that ceaseless repetition, while it does not actually make a statement true, can give it the appearance of truth.

The problem is largely psychological: we tend to take familiar things for granted as normal. And so a questionable statement, repeated to the point of numb familiarity, ceases to seem questionable.

One significant example of this process took place during the Middle Ages. At that point in history, universal taxation (collected from each citizen by a centralized government) was largely unknown. If the king wanted to wage war, dower a daughter, or buy a new set of armor, he had to go on a "begging campaign" to raise money for his project, and it was possible to ignore him. You had to pay a tax to the local nobility, but you only interacted with the link directly above you in the social chain. In other words, there may have been municipal tax, but no state or federal tax. It was not completely abnormal to pay something to the king, and in a sense his 'campaigns' for special funding were normal—but they were normal as an *exception*.

Then the Hundred Years War occurred. This "war" was actually a series of many short forays, each inevitably requiring a separate "begging campaign". The handouts became so frequent that by the end of the Hundred Years War, the people were more than accustomed to regularly doling out money to the king. Thus, what we would call 'the State' successfully established the first poll-tax. How did he achieve this? By arguing for financial gifts over and over, ad nauseam, until the request no longer seemed questionable.

Appeal to fear.

In the novel Dune, author Frank Herbert has his characters repeat a mantra that has stuck with me through the years. It is called the "Litany Against Fear" and its first lines are: "I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer." A truer word was never spoken. Fear is an

extremely powerful emotion, and while not necessarily a negative one, it almost always causes critical thought to suffer. This is why the "appeal to fear" is another popular fallacy.

Appeal to fear is used especially during war, usually in connection with threat of death, extermination, or loss of some important value. Either "the Germans want to destroy us all," or "President Obama wants to take your guns and enslave your family," or some other earth-shattering threat. There is no such thing as a small threat. Everything is cataclysmic.

Yet this technique is not limited to just national politics. Anyone who has been through Driver's Ed has been exposed to it in the form of bloody videos of auto collisions caused by driver negligence, even though, logically speaking, the gore should not in itself be an argument for driver conduct.

This approach, also called 'fear-mongering', is even present in advertising. I once saw a pharmaceutical commercial warning viewers to "ask your doctor" about drug X, because disease Y might be upon you this very minute and you'd have no idea until your bones were crumbling beneath you. These tactics may sound a bit silly, but we may assume that they wouldn't be used if they did not get results.

Reductio ad Hitlerum.

This fallacy was named by conservative thinker Leo Strauss and once you become aware of it, it seems so wickedly silly when anyone uses it. Yet it gets results.

It involves "playing the Hitler card," by claiming that this or that policy is similar to, the same as, or would lead to, a policy supported by Hitler and the Nazis. It tries to trick us into the following fallacious thought process:

Hitler was evil. Hitler supported policy X. Candidate A also supports policy X. Therefore: Candidate A is like Hitler.

The errors are obvious. Similarity in one respect does not imply similarity in all respects. Furthermore, just because Hitler held a certain opinion or policy, it does not logically follow that the opinion is wrong or evil or that the policy is not a good one. Maybe he liked cats. Does this mean that any cat-loving candidate today should be

shunned, on the assumption that their preference for cats also implies Nazi-level anti-Semitism? Of course not—and yet we could assemble hours of television footage showing comparisons between some candidate and Hitler. The American Right says Obamacare, abortion, etc., are things Hitler would have done, that support for abortion is equivalent to Nazi genocide. The Left says the same about those who oppose same-sex marriage, that they'd like to round up all homosexuals and execute them.

And it goes on and on, but the underlying principle is simply this: *anyone I don't like is Hitler*.

Renaming Vices.

Words change with time. This is natural and inevitable. It's just how language works. But it is also convenient, especially if you can guide and even engineer the change to your sociopolitical advantage.

We find that this is common, especially with words that are morally loaded.

For example, the term "individualism" has come to signify a positive, almost virtuous attitude in our culture; yet there was a time when the term did not exist. It did not need to exist because there was already a word for that attitude: it was called *egoism*. Yet egoism is laden with negative connotation because it describes the vice of self-centeredness. "Individualism" became popular when society began looking upon egoism as a good thing. Thus, the negative connotations were unacceptable, but rather than strip them from the existing term (egoism), the pejorative was discarded and replaced with something new—hence the birth of "individualism"—which referred to the same attitude but was colored with positive moral undertones.

A similar process occurred with regard to political corruption in America. Bribery is an age-old crime, with harsh punishments traditionally attached to it.

Yet, in the United States, money is the driving force of politics. In a sense, bribery is the lifeblood of the system. What then? The answer is simple. We took the term 'bribery', which was obviously despicable in the presence of democracy, and called it something else. We began calling it *lobbying,* and that is what it is called today,

and this explains why no one ever hears about bribery anymore. It is seen as normal and accepted without a thought.

The two examples just mentioned did occur in an organic manner. It would be difficult to pinpoint a group or organization that consciously set out to achieve it, although it obviously benefited certain groups. But we can also mention a third, more recent example, that was unquestionably a matter of well-orchestrated media manipulation.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the United States found itself faced with unusual problems of an extra-military nature, since it had to fight a war on an enemy who was not a nation. Among other things, this meant detaining people that were not technically members of a military force. It also brought up questions of interrogation and what was permissible during such efforts. Waterboarding as a technique for extracting information has been around since the 1950s, and probably before that, but it emerged as a moral question for the American public, since by any standard it was a form of torture. And yet, being the 'good guys', it was difficult for Americans to admit to themselves that they tortured their detainees. That was something only villains do in the movies. The solution was, again, terrifyingly simple. The media outlets against the practice harped on the term 'torture', but the media outlets in favor of it simply started calling it 'enhanced interrogation', which obviously could mean anything above and beyond normal interrogation, and thus enabled their viewers to virtually justify anything to their conscience without ever having to use the term 'torture'. After all, enhanced interrogation isn't torture, it is just interrogation, but harder.

Words will always be changing, but it is a process we ought to watch closely because it indicates moral transformations that may or may not be the result of propagandistic manipulation.

False Dichotomy.

"Dichotomizing means pathologizing; and pathologizing means dichotomizing" said Abraham Maslow.

In certain instances, it is true to say that there are two options and no more—that the answer is either black or white. Yet those instances are rare, and most of the time reality provides a colorful bouquet of possibilities, some very good, some very bad, and most a mix of both. You should be automatically suspicious, then, when

someone demands that you limit yourself to either left or right, for even at a fork in the road you have more than just two options. It is possible, and sometimes wise, to turn around and go back.

The purpose of the "false dichotomy" fallacy is to hide all other alternatives beyond the two options (usually chosen with prejudice and for the purpose of the unflattering contrast) placed directly before you. It is a fallacy of oversimplification.

False dichotomy has expressed itself systematically via the party system in America. As we've all been assured, you may choose either the Right or the Left, but if you choose anything else you are wasting your time. History itself refutes this bad logic, but it has proven extremely effective for our two parties as a means of maintaining power, since both of them benefit from this sort of thinking.

The lesser of two evils.

A counterpart to the false dichotomy, the *lesser of two evils* usually follows directly in its wake, reinforcing and solidifying its rationally 'narrowing' work. Using the contemporary political situation again as our example, the false dichotomy presents the public with only two options, and then each party can present unsavory candidates and they only have to present the "lesser of two evils" argument in order to convince voters that, rather than insisting on voting for candidates or parties they actually like, they must settle for the one they dislike the least. This tells the electorate that they must not hold out for an acceptable option, but that they must choose the option that is least unacceptable.

The success of this argument comes to the forefront during every election, when our friends tell us (and perhaps we tell ourselves): "I don't really care for X or Y. Ideally, I'd choose someone else entirely, but I've got to be realistic: this country is in trouble and we've got to make the best of it. I suppose this fellow here is the *lesser of two evils*."

And so it happens that the quality of our candidates slowly deteriorates because the parties no longer have to offer anything of substance, anything desirable; they simply have to show that their man is "less evil" than the other, and since they've spent months constructing a *reductio ad Hitlerum* aimed at the opposing candidate, their task is easy.

The maxim of St. Paul, that we must never *do evil that good may come of it*, is to us quite naïve and unworkable. Today we reap the fruit of our moral compromising.

Common sense.

We quoted Mencken above, saying that: "For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong."

In case you had not noticed, many of the fallacies we've mentioned so far involve the oversimplification of reality. Reality is rarely obvious and never simple, especially in our technological, globalized, age where everything is intermingled and travelling at supersonic speed. If there was ever a time when the most complex aspects of human life were easily discernable at first glance (I doubt there ever was such a time), that age is far behind us.

Yet we still wish that our mysterious, often contradictory reality were this straightforward and accessible; and this desire, so strong within us, makes us extremely susceptible to the "common sense" fallacy. This fallacy suggests to us that an argument is correct because it is simple, easy, obvious, and seemingly intuitive. It also teaches us to look with suspicion on any solution that intimidates us or exceeds our comprehension. The terms "intellectual" and "expert" become derogatory. The result is that, because many issues are complex to the point of inaccessibility, anyone who wishes to defend their case must employ oversimplifications, or else have their position rejected, not because it is wrong, but because it is difficult.

Cult of Personality.

If you turned the ad hominem fallacy upside-down and inside-out, you would get the Cult of Personality. Instead of refuting an argument by assaulting a person's character, this fallacy goes the opposite direction by building some person into an idealized, celebrity-hero who is beyond reproach and beyond scrutiny. This idol, who may even have a special title—"Führer" or "Ill Duce" for example, although more commonly just a radio talk-show host—is then used to garner support for a particular position since whatever he says will be accepted by followers without the intervention of the critical reason.

For example, when John Wayne spoke on some political topic, his words carried great weight because of the heroic ideal which he had

come to symbolize via his film work and public persona. I, personally, enjoy John Wayne movies, but it is nonetheless fallacious to accept a proposition simply because John Wayne supported it.

The mass media is often a significant component in the cult of personality because it controls who gets the limelight and how much each person gets, and its omnipresence enables the entire population to be incessantly bombarded with portraits, videos, and slogans relating to the hero. For this reason, although the cult of the personality has been present in every age, we can say that this trick is chiefly a modern technique due to the power of technology to build it up systematically. In the past, in order for some person to gain a fanatical following, they would have had to have done at least *something* to have gained the notoriety. Thus, for better or worse, and even if the reputation was overblown, they were typically acting with some significance. Today, on the other hand, it is conceivable that a cult of personality could be built up around a person who doesn't even exist—it could be done entirely artificially, using media.

Using the mass media as a vehicle, various regimes have exploited this procedure, from Adolf Hitler to Benito Mussolini to Saddam Hussein.

Demonizing the Enemy.

Hitler could not have become who he was without the Jews. As strange as it might sound, they were his greatest asset.

It is not possible to build up such extreme levels of irrational enthusiasm in the people without also, at the same time, fueling an equally powerful force of aggression. Think of small children who are prone to become "over-excited": it always begins with enthusiasm and laughter, but if allowed to go too far it turns into hysteria, tears, and tantrums. Because masses, in many ways, operate like psychological children, a government which fuels irrational enthusiasm runs this very same risk. Hence, if you are going to build a hero you must also have an enemy, and the greater the worship your hero claims, the greater must be the demonization of the enemy. If your hero is a god-king, the enemy must be represented as the embodiment of evil itself. This is the only way to exploit the enthusiasm while avoiding the aggressions that come with it.

The Jews were Hitler's 'other'—the great enemy. This explains much in regard to how so many "normal" people could commit such atrocities against that group. They did not begin that way—but they ended that way through the process of demonization wherein their normal psychological tendencies were exploited and perverted to a political end.

The Scapegoat.

Think of "the scapegoat" as the everyday, milder version of the demonized enemy, serving a more symbolic function. This technique exploits the same human weaknesses, but on a subtler level. We may not all reach violent levels of enthusiasm and hysteria, but we all desire self-justification—we all desire a personal entity on which to place blame for our troubles, frustrations, and failures. This desire, subtle as it may be, is what makes us susceptible to the Scapegoat.

For example, if I am struggling to find employment, I might blame immigrants or the president. Now, immigrants may indeed be the reason I am unemployed; but it might also be that I've made some bad decisions, or that I have an unpleasant personality, or maybe the economy is just lagging and it is not the fault of any particular group. On a psychological level, however, only one of the former options will satisfy my deep need to find a *personal* evil. We search for this personal evil and we must find it, even if we must project it onto some person or group. We do this because, the last thing we wish to do is blame ourselves.

This is perhaps one of the main reasons our two-party system survives: They provide one another with a perfect scapegoat. They need each other. They are symbiotic. The Right could not do without the Left, because then they would have no one to blame for everything that goes wrong.

Divide and Conquer.

Recently, I saw a political poster on the Internet depicting an American soldier in Iraq. The caption said something along the lines of: "I make less than minimum wage, and a guy who flips burgers thinks he should be paid $12 an hour?" The obvious intent was, of course, to induce disgust at the idea that a burger flipper deserves more than a soldier on deployment, in other words the idea that minimum wage workers deserve higher pay. The implication is that

fry cooks have no business asking for more, because then they'd be making more than soldiers, and this seems preposterous.

Now here's the problem: What if the soldier in the photo is drastically underpaid as well (and it is fairly obvious to most people that he probably is)? If this is the case, then the fry cooks are the natural allies of the soldiers. Perhaps the soldier's vocation still warrants greater compensation, but that is irrelevant. They have common ground, which is the problem of unjust remuneration for their labor. They would gain much by uniting, but if they can, on the other hand, be made to hate one another as if they were enemies, then they undermine each other or at least focus on one another and not the actual source of the problem that afflicts both groups. Neither can hope to benefit by hating one another.

So we might do well to ask: Who actually benefits from this kind of messaging? Who would benefit by encouraging two large segments of the lower working class to ridicule each other for an injustice suffered by both and for problems that neither of them can fix? Obviously this works to the great advantage of those who write the checks. Logically, one would think that the government or the corporations would be at the center of such complaints. But thanks to the technique of 'divide and conquer' or in this case, 'divide and rule', the actual power groups can stand comfortably aloof and watch the show. That is not to say that the CEO of some fast-food chain actually created the poster. The poster is not the technique. It is a consequence of the technique. That these groups would create such posters to use against each other is proof that decades of fueling division and training people to think in these terms have been successful.

Flag-waving.

We could also call this the "Appeal to Patriotism." Whether or not a person is sufficiently "patriotic" can be a life or death point in political matters, particularly in nations like the United States where national self-awareness has reached an incredible degree.

Flag-waving is an attempt to win support for one's position by showing either that a particular person or action is patriotic or that supporting a policy will benefit the nation. It also works in the opposite direction: If you can prove to Americans that an action is unpatriotic, then you've all but handed it a death sentence. How

often do we hear the accusation that such-and-such a person "hates America," in attempts to attach negative associations to that person?

As the name "flag-waving" implies, this technique is usually attached to symbols, such as the American flag or the Statue of Liberty or some other universally recognized image. A politician who appears in a photo with a flag wrapped around his shoulders, or with a flag blowing in the background, this is an attempt to cause the viewer to take all the positive feeling associated with the flag and then, consciously or unconsciously, apply them to the person, even if they may have no rational cause for making such an association.

Managing the news.

This involves orchestrating a coordinated effort to present the same few, simple points to a population, ceaselessly and from all directions. It involves incorporating all media formats including newspaper, television and radio. Jacques Ellul called this process "encirclement"; I call it "pulverization by the media." It is similar to what is called "classical conditioning" in psychology, because it plants and reinforces associations by combinations of the various other techniques, such as *ad nauseum*.

Adolf Hitler said: "The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly—it must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over."

The media machines of today have taken Hitler's advice to heart. The key to this technique is relentlessness: No one must have a moment's peace in order to find himself in the din.

Slogans, Catchphrases, Clichés.

Although we've already mentioned this above, it warrants mention again. Bertrand de Jouvenel said that, instead of rational discourse, modern audiences were best reached through,

> "Stupid slogans, which come trippingly to the tongue and are a pleasure to repeat, songs which exalt the 'comrades' and ridicule the 'enemy,' these are the stuff of politics. Mix with it a little

> doctrine, but only a very little, and reduce it to the simplest propositions."[1]

The reason people might lean this way is not hard to discern. In a democracy everyone cares about politics, and everyone wants to engage in intelligent political discourse. Yet not everyone can understand and absorb the many complex arguments necessary to refute the hypotheses of their opponents. After all, most of us can barely defend our own opinions.

The answer to this problem occurs almost naturally through a process of reduction: philosophies become "programs," programs become platforms, platforms become slogans, slogans become catchphrases, and catchphrases become clichés. The story ends with an environment where men talk at one another without speaking and hear without listening. And both participants get to walk away under the impression that they engaged in meaningful conversion.

Virtue words.

Certain words, depending on time, place, and culture, wield an unbelievable amount of power over the minds and emotions of a people. These are usually the words which represent the supreme values of the society. In American society, examples might be words like: "liberty," "freedom," or "equality." There are also vice words which correspond to these: "tyranny," "slavery," or "hate."

The problem is that these words, while surrounded with an almost holy aura, are at the same time extremely vague. If someone says that "freedom is under attack," everyone recoils in disgust, and yet we do not really know what this means—it could mean almost anything depending on the speaker. What if the speaker is referring to the "freedom to have an abortion"? What then?

But that is the beauty of virtue words: it draws the audience, almost irresistibly over to your side even before they know what exactly you are arguing for, because the response has become a reflex. The words "freedom" and "equality" act as invocations to the modern mind, producing an almost guaranteed effect. After reflection, of course, we may realize that we don't agree with the speaker after all, but how many of us remember to pause and reflect?

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[1] Bertrand de Jouvenel, *On Power.*

Ideology.

Ideologies are what we get when we try to explain reality—which is vast, complex, and mysterious—with a few simple formulas. It is another fallacy of oversimplification, although this one is particular to democracies. Alexis de Tocqueville observed that in such societies "the craving to discover general laws in everything, to include a great number of objects under the same formula, and to explain a mass of facts by a single cause, becomes an ardent, and sometimes an undiscerning, passion in the human mind."

He said that, because we see everyone as equal politically, we also treat everyone as equal mentally. Thus, we act as if we should need no recourse to outside sources in order to understand life's problems. He says we "would fain succeed brilliantly and at once, but they would be dispensed from great efforts to obtain success. These conflicting tendencies lead straight to the research of general ideas, by aid of which they flatter themselves that they can figure very importantly at a small expense."

The popular ideologies in America are: capitalism, liberalism, and democracy. Each of these pretends to provide intuitive, simple explanations to overwhelmingly complex problems. But they are rigid and always incomplete. Thus, they create minds equally rigid and incomplete.

Ideology is about taking an idea, perhaps even a very good idea, and making it the measure of all other ideas. It is not about error as such, but about taking a small truth and making it the only truth, the "Big Idea" that displaces every other truth. It has but two rules: 1) The Big Idea is always right; 2) If the Big Idea proves wrong, see rule one.

Multiplicity of ideologies.

The reason I stress the importance of understanding what exactly ideology is, is that this is more useful than trying to examine all the shortcomings of the ideologies you'll bump into.

First and foremost, the problem is that these ideologies change in content or emphasis by time and place and even from individual to individual. Capitalism used to be called Liberalism, and now liberalism means something very different in common use, at least in America. In Europe, it carries yet another meaning. And capitalism itself, although newer, does not mean what it used to. Likewise, Marxism has gone through various developments and had

a number of exponents from different countries so that it isn't correct to critique Marx and assume you've critiqued Marxism as it now stands.

Socialism is perhaps the most convoluted of all, with its exponents ranging from very sane to very insane, which is why it was originally condemned by the popes and then later even the most traditional of popes (I'm thinking Benedict XVI) could say that it is now, in some of its contemporary iterations, entirely compatible with Christian doctrine. Benedict said this not because he disagreed with Leo XIII, but because the socialism that presented itself to him was not the socialism which presented itself to Leo. And it is a sign of the prudence of the popes that they are able to recognize such things.

Statistics: Fact or Truth?

Davila said that "statistics is the tool of those who give up understanding in order to manipulate." When he said this, Davila had recognized that statistics, as a form of propaganda, have come to wield too much power in public discourse.

Statistics, in a way, lead inevitably to fallacious thinking. This is because no single statistic carries any truth value in itself: it must be interpreted; and in order to properly interpret any statistic, we usually need a great many more statistics, as well as experience, reasoning skills, and objectivity.

The problem is that all of those "interpretive" requirements happen in the background, usually without our even thinking about it, and we forget that it is even occurring. Because the only part of the process we notice is the "fact", we operate on the assumption that the fact "interprets itself". We forget that a naked fact carries no truth with the interpretation, and multiple interpretations are always possible. And so we encounter two problems with statistics—two forms of deception: first, we forget that they always require interpretation; and second, we forget that in order to arrive at a valid interpretation, we usually need more data.

The following two case examples are drawn from modern political conversation, and they illustrate that this deception is used by both sides of the political war.

Example 1: Planned Parenthood's Budget

The scenario:

Planned Parenthood is accused by political opponents of being a significant provider of abortion services. Planned Parenthood responds by claiming that, of all the services they provide, only 3% are abortions.

The deception:

The statistic itself is true, but only when the calculations are performed in a certain way. Consider this: Planned Parenthood also administers pregnancy tests. A pregnancy test, as most people know, requires almost no time, no money, does not require a physician, and is minimally invasive. An abortion is a different matter entirely.

However, if we so desire, we can consider a pregnancy test as "1 service" and an abortion as "1 service." This treats them as mathematically equal, even though no honest person would say they are equal in reality. If we do the math in this manner, Planned Parenthood can administer 97 pregnancy tests and 3 abortions in one hour, and then claim that only 3% of their services are abortions. This is true, mathematically. But realistically?—it is so misleading as to be an outright lie. It is a fact, but it hides the truth.

Example 2: The Tax Burden of the Rich

The scenario:

Politician X claims the wealthy pay a disproportionate and unjust amount of taxes to the government. In support of this claim, he explains that the wealthiest 1% of Americans pay a whopping 36% of the taxes. If we expand this to the top 10%, the group pays almost 70% of the taxes. These figures, it is implied, suggest massively unjust demands being made on the rich. We are then told that the lower classes (the bottom 50%) are getting off easy, paying a scant 3.3%.

The deception:

Planned Parenthood was guilty of interpreting data in a misleading way. The politician above, on the other hand, is guilty of a partial presentation of data which, in the end, is equally dishonest because its sets up the listener for a conclusion that does not take into account the whole picture. To see why, we need to incorporate some supplementary data, thus acquiring all of the necessary points of reference.

In addition to the *distribution of taxes*, let's also include the *distribution of wealth*. If we do this, then we see that the top 1% holds 35% of the wealth, and the top 10% holds about 70%.

What about the bottom 50% of Americans, who we are told are getting off easy by only paying some 3.3% of the taxes? Well, it happens that this group holds only 2.6% of the total wealth. So, if by "fair taxation" we mean that each person should pay an equal share of his income, or if we mean that each should pay taxes in proportion to the percentage of total wealth he controls, then it only makes sense that he who has much will pay much, and he who has almost nothing will pay almost nothing.

But these partisan debates do not really concern us here. The point is simply that statistics are, as we encounter them in the media and in popular politics, an instrument of propaganda. Like any other piece of information, they are only useful insofar as we truly understand their depth and are competent to interpret them in light of the whole picture, the relevant historical situation, and the present context. For most of us, this means that statistics are mostly useless and only serve to manipulate our conclusions by giving us the feeling of having based our decisions 'on the data'.